Annual Book Award

- The Navy we need (it's not the one the Republicans blew the bank on)
- What do college presidents do all day?
- Michael Massing on Foggy Bottom

The Washington Monthly

MARCH 1989/$3.00

What's wrong with this magazine

by

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James Fallows Mickey Kaus
Phil Keisling Michael Kinsley
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-era Walter Shapiro
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LETTERS

Start Me Up

Mr. Schlosberg's identification of risk capital acquisition as the biggest problem for small businesses is right on target ["The Start-Up Blues," January]. The problem is common to just about all businesses below the Fortune 1,000, though not just people with new venture ideas.

One type of federal program that might make some sense to look at is the loan guarantee business. When young families needed houses after World War II, a lot of agencies and mechanisms (FNMA, GNMA, etc.) were set up to make them bankable by pooling the risks of a lot of loans and taking the risk off the bank's hands. When the vet's kids needed college, student loan guarantees (and Sallie Mae to resell them) made the exercise somewhat easier. The SBA does some of this but, as you have noted, is often closer to the process of lending than necessary.

WILLIAM A. PRICE
Wheaton, Illinois

President Bush should read "The Start-Up Blues" before he submits his capital gains tax proposal to the Congress. His sweeping and ill-considered campaign promise to cut capital gains tax rates will make it even harder for start-up firms to obtain the capital they need to survive and prosper.

I have proposed that capital gains tax rates be reduced but only for new and direct investments in small businesses and only if the investments are held for four years. These investments are risky because start-up firms do fail, and in many cases there is no possibility for any return while the firm is getting off the ground. These are precisely the type of high-risk, long-term investments we need if America is to compete in international markets.

In contrast, President Bush would reduce capital gains tax rates for any old or new investment. There are thousands of "capital assets," including paintings, antique cars, and vacation homes.

It does not provide any "incentive" for investors to include more investments in start-up firms. Start-up firms are starved for capital, and when they starve, we will all feel the hunger pangs in time.

DALE BUMPERS
Washington, D.C.

Senator Bumpers is chairman of the Senate Small Business Committee.

Michelin Men

Daniel Farber's review of Richard Neely's book ["You Little Tort," January] overlooked the most important reason for America's wasteful and destructive product liability law: our lack of national health insurance. French judges are never forced to choose between victimizing Michelin Tire with an unjust verdict and leaving a paraplegic to beg in the streets; they know the paraplegic will be provided for in any case.

In those relatively few injury cases genuinely caused by unsafe products, the government should have the right to sue the manufacturer for reimbursement of medical treatment expenses.

HUGO S. CUNNINGHAM
Omaha, Nebraska

Turf Wars

Let me suggest that you investigate further the nature of the nursing-RCT controversy ["Tilting at Windmills," January]. Your superficial analysis surprises me.

It is clearly a "turf" issue. In response to the nursing shortage, a committee of physicians from the AMA House of Delegates has decided to create a new category of health care worker who would in fact practice nursing but whose training and supervision would come from physicians.

A nostalgia on the part of some physicians for the good old days when nurses were hospital-trained by MDs (and not so uppity), has spawned this hare-brained scheme.

The nursing shortage is real and critical. Animosity between medicine and nursing is approaching an all-time high. The unbelievably arrogant and poorly thought-out RCT proposal will only make a deteriorating situation worse.

LIN BASSETT SCHAYE
Chicago, Illinois

I can assure you from my own experience that this is *not* the first time that nurses object to a new group of paramedics to be created. When I immigrated to the United States in 1950, I got myself a job as orderly in the operating room in Hackensack, New Jersey. The surgeons noticed that after my eight-hour shift was over I kept hanging around the OR watching surgery. One of them asked me after a few months whether I would like to be trained as a "surgical technician"—otherwise also called a "scrub technician."

In those days, this being a new specialty, formal courses were unknown, and the few hospitals that experimented with the idea sort of grew their own by teaching their scrub technicians. The screaming and hollering of the registered nurses (over my dead body!) when the ORS first told them that I would learn the job had to be heard to be believed. As one of them told me: We have nothing against you personally, but we don't want technicians, period. Well, little by little they reconciled themselves to the inevitable, and today there are formal courses for scrub technicians and every hospital is using them. I've a strong hunch it will be the same for the RCT's if they don't give up.

ERWIN FUCHS
Seattle, Washington

More on Denial

I was quite surprised, perhaps shocked would be a better word, when I read "The Case For Denial" [December]

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by Paul Glastris. Surprised and shocked because in my ten years as a Shriner and my eight years of work at the International Shriners Hospitals' Headquarters, I have been continually impressed—no, amazed—at the commitment and dedication of the physicians, nurses, and therapists at all Shriners Hospitals to do "whatever it takes" to help their young patients overcome their disabilities.

Paul Glastris recounts his experience at a Shriners Hospital saying, "It seemed the whole point of Shriners was to get kids used to the idea of being handicapped. . . ." In actuality, the entire approach at Shriners Hospitals is founded upon helping children to rise *above* their physical problems.

I expect the recollection of Mr. Glastris's experience at a Shriners Hospital may have been shaped by the tremendous frustration it sounds as if he felt from losing his arm at such an early age. I feel his assessment was neither fair, nor accurate. Most of the patients leave our hospitals believing that there isn't anything they *can't* do.

MICHAEL C. ANDREWS
Tampa, Florida

Mr. Andrews is director of public relations for the International Shriners Hospitals' Headquarters.

The author replies:

I guess you had to be there.

Dupe Dope

Steve Burkholder asserts that *National Review*, in an article co-authored by J. Michael Waller, "depicted Chris Dodd, Tom Harkin, and Pat Schroeder, among others, as Soviet dupes" ["And Why They Let Anyone Be An Informant," January]. That's not true. We labeled Dodd and Harkin leftist ideologues and cataloged a list of reasons why. We noted Schroeder's fundraising letter for the Nicaragua Network, a pro-Sandinista group, and also that she later disassociated herself from it.

Of course, it suited Mr. Burkholder's purposes to slide over the "among others," which included Rep. George Crockett, whose long public history of communist fellow-traveling we recounted in some detail. But we wouldn't even call him a "dupe." He's something much worse: he actually believes in that stuff.

Mr. Burkholder was trying mightily—huffing and puffing as he went along—to prove his case by exaggerating Mr. Waller's. An article "supported in part by a grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism" should show more care in throwing around words.

WICK ALLISON
New York, New York

Mr. Allison is publisher of National Review.

The author replies:

Noting that, for want of space, the *Monthly*'s editors chose to trim my description of the article co-authored by Waller that listed several members of Congress (including George Crockett), I stand by the summary. Another torturous rereading of the article by Messrs. Waller and Joseph Sobran bears out my one-sentence reading as an accurate representation of the broad-brush charges made in that article. I note that *National Review*'s editors headlined the piece "Congress's Red Army," adorning that title with a Soviet flag.

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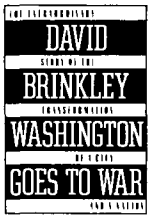

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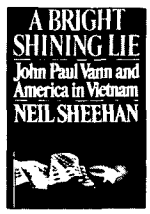

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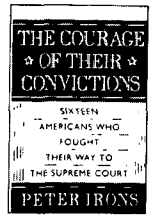

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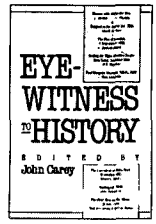

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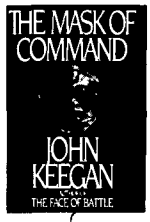

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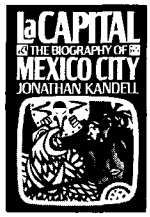

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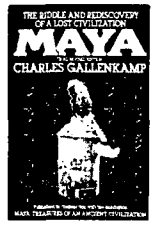

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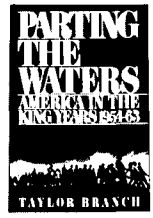

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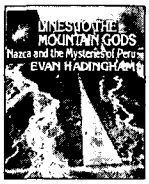

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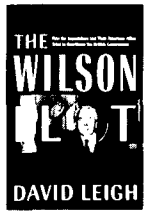

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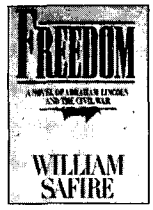

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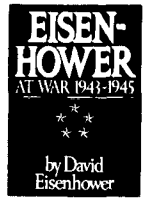

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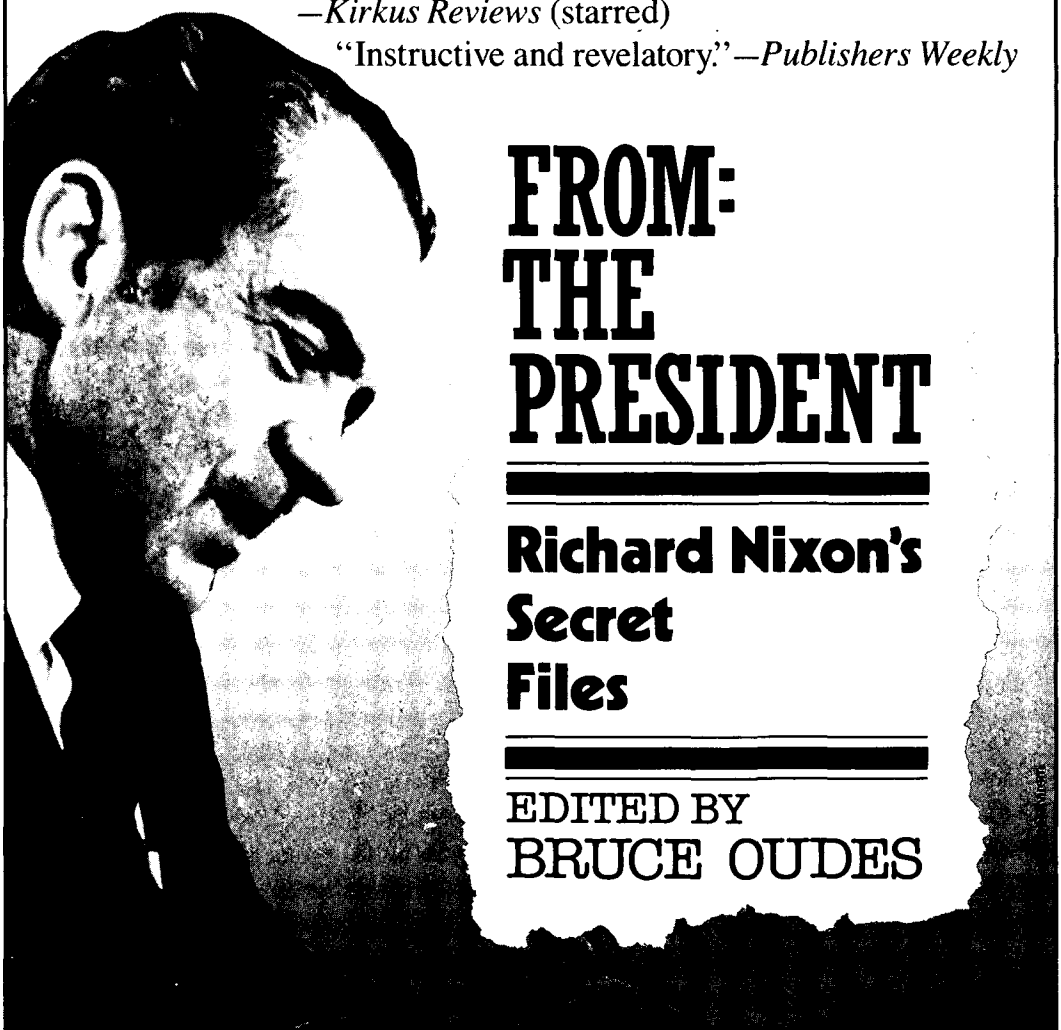

FROM: THE PRESIDENT

Richard Nixon's Secret Files

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The Washington Monthly

Volume Twenty-One, Number Two March 1989

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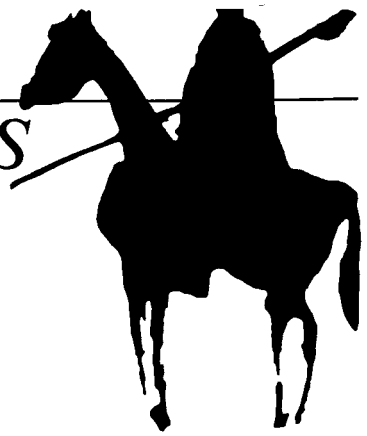
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



It's time to revive our Only in California Department. Why? The California Supreme Court recently decided that it was not moral turpitude per se for a lawyer to hire a hit man. Although the lawyer admitted that it was his intent to have a former client "seriously injured," the court ruled that he can regain his license in two years by passing a written exam on professional responsibility. . . .

Did you know that the U.S. Army is developing "brave pills" for soldiers to use in combat? I agree with the serviceman who, when told about the pill by Fred Francis of NBC News, said, "Sometimes it's good to be afraid, good to keep your head down, instead of being the brave John Wayne, running up the hill.". . .

But if the Army wants to find an immediate market for these pills it might try the pilots who fly NATO planes. According to *Jane's Defense Weekly*, NATO lost more than 100 jet fighters in crashes during just the one year ending October 31, 1988. . . .

This raises the question of what the hundreds of billions Ronald Reagan spent on defense actually bought us. News of fighters crashing in Europe is accompanied by this report by Molly Moore in *The Washington Post*: "The nation's B-1 bomber force today may not fly as far as intended, carry as heavy a load, or properly use all the weapons required to perform its full mission, and new estimates show the strategic bombers could cost $400 million each."

Then there are the stories in *Newsweek* and *The New York Times* about the B-2 Stealth bomber. The latter, by Jeffrey A. Merkeley, is entitled "The Stealth Fiasco," while *Newsweek*'s article by Gregg Easterbrook runs under the head: "Sticker Shock: The Stealth Is a Bomb."

And then there's all the money the Navy has squandered on the wrong weapons—see Scott Shuger's article on page 10. Incredibly, the principal villain behind the Navy's extravagance, John Lehman, the man who never saw an aircraft carrier he didn't love, recently wrote an article for *The Washington Post*'s Outlook section entitled, "Pentagon Rx: Cut the Fat, Build the Services' Muscle.". . .

What's wrong with baseball is suggested by the fact that Claudell Washington recently signed a contract with his *seventh* major league team. How can fans have a sense of loyalty to a team as they did, say, with the Brooklyn Dodgers that Roger Kahn described in *The Boys of Summer*? The problem of

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course is free agency. But under the old system players were often radically underpaid. Consider the case of one of the most skilled of those boys of summer, Carl Furillo, who played right field for the Dodgers of the fifties, and who recently died in poverty. Under the current system he would probably be overpaid. We need some genius to find a formula that will encourage players to stick with one team but make sure they are compensated fairly. . . .

Speaking of sports scandals, one is that there still has not been a black head coach in the National Football League even though the applicant pool is not exactly limited. The owners should look at professional basketball, where three black coaches—Lenny Wilkens, K.C. Jones, and Al Attles—have led their teams to championships. . . .

In this issue you will find a debate between me and Michael Kinsley (see pages 26 and 52) on a national service draft, which he opposes and I favor. As I have advocated this idea I have found considerable support among older people who served under the democratic draft of the forties, fifties, and early sixties, and at least some openness on the part of the young. But there is almost total opposition from the people who reached their mid-twenties after 1964 and did not serve in the military or the Peace Corps or VISTA or something similar. I think I have finally figured out why. Because these people chose not to serve, once they reached a point—usually around their mid-twenties—where career and family considerations begin to make service difficult if not impossible, they then, to protect themselves from guilt, had a self-interest in believing that there is no such thing as a duty to serve. Since the group now includes the people who for the next 30 years will increasingly control the positions of power in this country, it's clearly going to take a moral revolution to put the national service idea across.

The Democratic Leadership Council's national service proposal, which is receiving considerable favorable attention in Congress, contains a financial incentive—government help with the cost of college—to attract the poor and the middle class to service. But there is still nothing to inspire the rich to do their part or, for that matter, the meritocratic elite, who know they can get high-salaried jobs that will pay off their student loans and spare them the tiresome demands of national service. . . .

I should note that the foregoing is in no way an ad hominem attack on Kinsley. He and James Fallows, Taylor Branch, and Jonathan Rowe, among *Monthly* alumni, more than saved their souls by working at slave wages for both Ralph Nader and *The Washington Monthly*. I should also note that both Nicholas Lemann and Matthew Cooper have devoted many hours to the Big Brother program, and I'm sure other of our alumni have done other worthy work in addition to their stint at the *Monthly*. But the fact remains that community service agencies have not been overwhelmed by volunteers from the rich and the intelligentsia and that almost no one from these groups serves

"STOP THEM DAMN PICTURES"

That's what "Boss" Tweed demanded when he saw the handwriting on the Hall (Tammany, that is). But the pictures didn't stop. "Boss" Tweed met his maker in the Ludlow Street Jail and Thomas Nast put bitingly eloquent political cartoons squarely and permanently in the middle of American political life. Tweed aside, we think Emerson had it right when he said, *"Caricatures are often the truest history of the times."*

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in the military. . . .

A 19-year-old Washington woman, Mona Shiferaw, broke up with her boyfriend not long ago. He began threatening her. He broke the windshield on her brother's car. Police arrested him, but the court let him go. Then he called Mona and said, according to a police affidavit: "This time you're really going to get it. It's a perfect time to get a shotgun because I just got my last paycheck." She called the police, who again arrested the ex-boyfriend, who was again released by the court. Two days later he shot and killed Mona.

We wrote about many similar cases in May 1987 (see "Battered Justice," Joan Meier). When are the courts going to wake up?. . .

We're glad to report at least some progress has been made with another campaign—the one against all those ads that glamorize speeding cars. *Adweek* recently recognized as one of the worst ads of the year the commercial with the Mercedes gliding along at 125 miles per hour: "A practice that we've come to associate with reckless teenagers suddenly gets an upscale gloss, thus legitimizing a particularly dangerous form of anti-social behavior.". . .

We were so eager to see another of our causes triumph that we proclaimed somewhat prematurely in 1979 that the Me Decade was over and that The New Idealism would replace it. Eight years later Paul Taylor, writing in *The Washington Post*, was similarly optimistic when he proclaimed the arrival of "The We Decade." Now the *Post*'s David Broder is telling us "The Self-Interest Decade Is Over." Let's hope that this time the optimism is justified. . . .

There are some signs that it is. George Bush's inaugural address was certainly a step in the right direction:

"My friends, we are not the sum of our possessions. They are not the measure of our lives. In our hearts we know what matters. We cannot hope only to leave our children a bigger car, a bigger bank account. We must hope to give them a sense of what it means to be a loyal friend, a loving parent, a citizen who leaves his home, his neighborhood and town better than he found it."

Amen—except I can't help wondering why a man who loyally served the greedy for eight years as Ronald Reagan's lap-dog is suddenly coming on like Jimmy Stewart in *It's a Wonderful Life*. . . .

If you are a Democrat who lost a close race in November, you will not be thrilled to learn that your national committee had $3 million that it chose not to spend on the party's candidates last fall. The money will be used to pay salaries and other expenses of Democratic National Committee officials. This is further proof of a rule well known to everyone who has ever worked in the field for a government agency: "The fellows in Washington always take care of themselves first."

The Democrats lost four Senate seats—in Florida, Montana, Washington, and Wyoming—by narrow margins. John Vinich, who lost Wyoming by just 1,165 votes, told Peter A. Brown of Scripps-Howard that the DNC money "could have made the difference.". . .

The Peace Corps has been around 28 years. More than a hundred thousand people have been members of the organization. So it is odd that not one of them has been named Peace Corps director. The latest appointee, George Bush's choice, is Paul L.D. Coverdell, the Republican leader of the Georgia state senate, whose sole exposure to the hardships of the tropics has been the hot air of his colleagues in the legislature. . . .

Among all the people who have been criticized by the *Monthly* over the years, it has seemed to me that our fellow journalists are the most unforgiving. Their distaste for taking what they dish out was illustrated again recently by the flap over whether reporters admitted to the congressional press gallery should have to disclose their sources of income. The reasoning behind the request is that the public has just as much interest in knowing a reporter is on the take from a lobbyist as it does in knowing whether a congressman is the recipient of similar beneficence. The gallery's executive committee, which voted 4 to 3 for the requirement, was up for reelection last month. Their fellow journalists voted so resoundingly in favor of the noble principle of nondisclosure that the committee is now stacked 6 to 1 against the requirement. . . .

Of the many villains in the savings and loan scandal—weak regulation, deregulation, and crooked S&L executives—one that I had not known until it was pointed out by Warren Brookes, one of the handful of

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columnists who feel some obligation to do reporting as well as pontificating, is that when the FSLIC was first established in 1934, Congress required savings institutions to pay a fee of 25 cents per $100 on deposit to finance the insurance system. If that fee had not been twice lowered thereafter at the behest of the savings institutions, the FSLIC would now have a surplus of $5 billion....

I am delighted to see that the government is going after another guilty party in the S&L mess that few people are aware of—the accounting firms that kept certifying that the situation was A-OK at institutions that were already gurgling as they were about to go under....

One hopeful sign on the international front is the recent recommendation of a group of U.S. and Soviet terrorism experts that the two superpowers set up a joint group to combat terrorism, including joint action to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear or chemical and biological weapons. A good way to start would be for the Russians to cut off aid to the Syrians and Libyans....

While all of us at the *Monthly* are delighted by the success of Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters* (see Annual Book Award, page 23), it has caused me to reflect on how much the right choice of name can help. Taylor's full name is Franklin Taylor Branch. Suppose he had decided to go by Frank. His accomplishments would still be impossible to ignore, but I can't imagine Frank Branch rolling off the tongue at literary cocktail parties with nearly the ease of the name he chose....

A judicial racket you may not be aware of is that federal judges do not have to resign when they step down from full-time duty. Resignation means their retirement pay will be the same salary they received during their last year on the bench. But they can instead choose, as most do, to be "senior judges." This status permits them to hear cases if they are needed and if they want to. But they don't have to do anything. One, for example, has performed no judicial duties since 1978. The important thing about being a "senior judge" is that you keep on getting those salary increases that active judges receive. If the increase scheduled for February had not been derailed, Warren Burger, who took senior judge status when he stepped down from the Supreme Court, would be getting $69,500 more than he would have if he had simply resigned....

Speaking of rackets, the American Bar Association is not only holding its tax-deductible annual meeting in Hawaii this year—it has also arranged follow-up seminars in Australia, New Zealand, China, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, and Japan, in case the members would like to extend their tax-deductible trip to include the Far East....

But for real connoisseurs of this scam, I recommend the Kenyan-American Surgical Nursing Conference, which will be held at such centers of advanced medicine as the Samburu Game Reserve, the Masai Mara Game Reserve, and the Mt. Kenya Safari Club. The brochure states, "Tax deductibility benefits guaranteed." And lest our friends at the bar are afraid they'll be left out, the sponsors are also holding a Kenyan-American Legal Conference with the same guarantee....

As you may have read, they've had a hard time assembling a jury for the trial of Oliver North because so many people saw his televised testimony before Congress, which, having been immunized, cannot be used against him. So what did Tim O'Brien of ABC News do? He goes on "World News Tonight" with tapes of the North testimony. Then he says to the viewers, "If you paid close attention to this report, you are ineligible to serve as a juror." There was a legitimate reason for the original televising of North's testimony. But all O'Brien's report did was make it that much harder to assemble a jury....

In the renewed concern about chemical and biological weapons, which I mostly applaud, I hope people won't forget that not all such weapons are necessarily evil. My favorite example is one that to the best of my knowledge has so far appeared only in the James Bond film, *Goldfinger*—a 24-hour nerve gas that knocks the enemy out for a day but leaves them otherwise unharmed. Since I favor winning international disputes without killing people, as we did with the Berlin Airlift and the Cuban Missile Crisis, it seems to me that the 24-hour nerve gas would be a dandy weapon indeed....

—*Charles Peters*

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The Navy We Need

And the one we got

by Scott Shuger

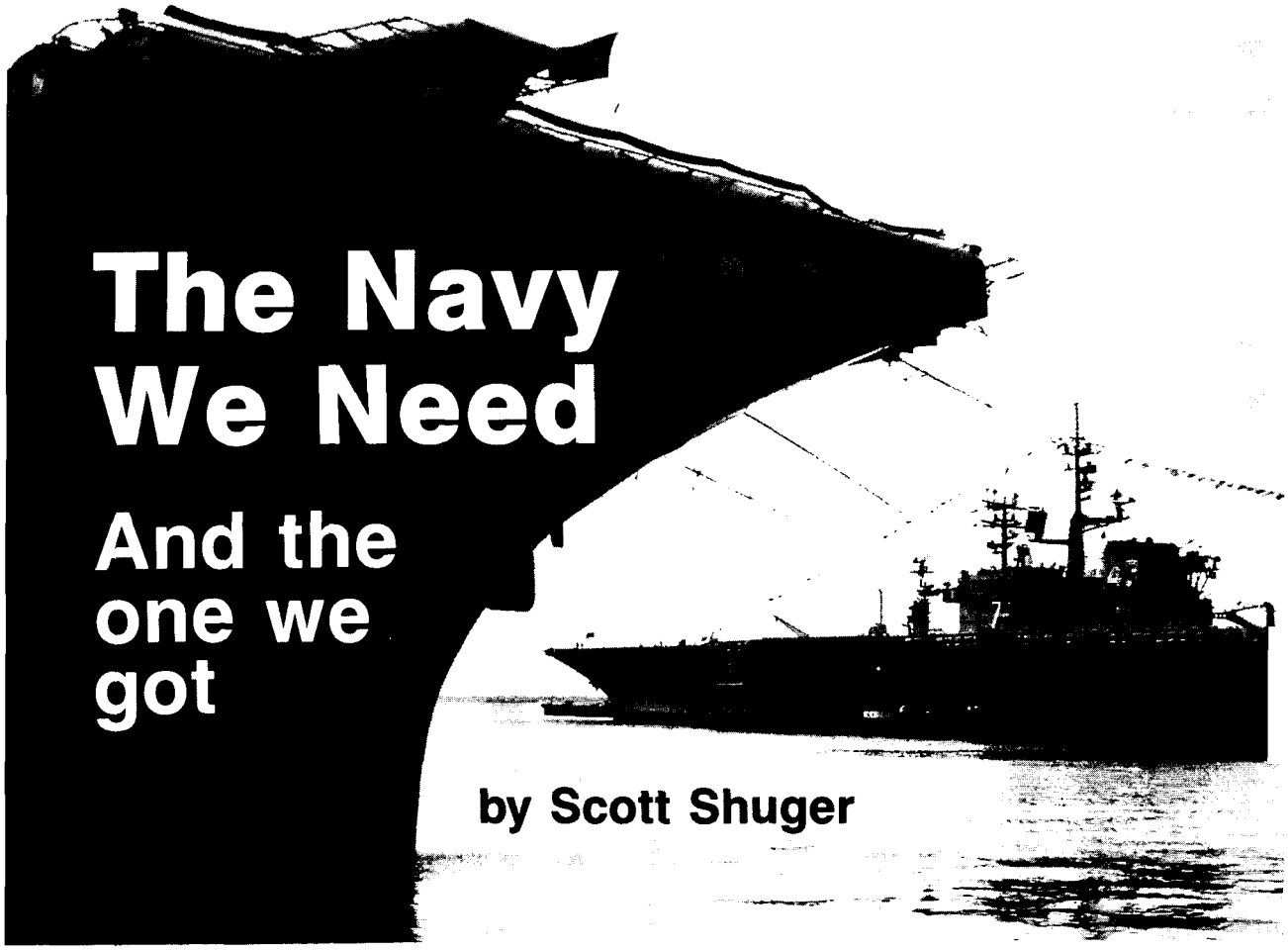

Photo by Charles Kennedy

The current political and economic climate dictates that something like $300 billion worth of military programs will have to be canceled during the new administration. And of all the services, the Navy is the most likely to be deeply cut. Over the past eight years, it is the only service that has actually grown. While the number of Army divisions has remained the same and the number of planes in the Air Force's tactical wings has actually shrunk, the Navy's fleet has swelled by more than 100 ships to 587, and its senior enlisted ranks have almost doubled since 1981. Moreover, the Navy's proposals for new programs—those not already underway—total around $80 billion.

Among the items the Navy is plumping for:

► Two more *Nimitz*-class nuclear supercarriers, for a total of eight vessels of that class, bringing fleet strength to 15 flattops, up from 12 in 1981.

► Smaller ships. The Navy wants 26 *Burke*-class guided-missile destroyers to go with the three already under construction and the 27 larger, *Ticonderoga*-class guided-missile cruisers already funded.

► Subs anyone? The Navy wants up to 30 *Seawolf*-class attack submarines—subs designed to sink other subs—producing a fleet of 100 nuclear-powered attack subs. The Navy also wants money to complete the *Ohio*-class nuclear-powered submarines with their long-range Trident D5 missiles, for a total of 16-20 boats of that class.

► Don't forget the planes. The Navy wants to continue purchasing the carrier-based F/A-18 strike fighter, for a total of more than 1,000. It also wants to buy a new version of the carrier-based F-14 fighter, and to fund improvements for the older models already in the inventory, for a total of nearly 600.

To understand which weapons belong on the Navy's shopping list and which ones don't, you have to understand the scenarios the Navy is likely to encounter. While it's impossible to know just what our military needs will be next year, let alone 5, 10, 15 years from now, we can be certain that we'll need conventional weapons and nuclear weapons to keep the peace with the Soviets; we'll need to be ready to fight in limited, "tactical" engagements; and we should have the capacity to fight "strategic" battles on a global scale.

Many of the items on the Navy's budget request aren't what we need for any of these scenarios. And

Scott Shuger is writing a book on the Navy.

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many of the weapons that we do need are either inadequately funded or missing from the budget entirely.

A one-shot deal

Consider that first item: two more big nuclear aircraft carriers. So powerful is the mystique of carriers that senior Navy officials admit that in wartime they'd really want not the 15 carriers their request is based on but 20 to 24. Yet the carrier mystique belies considerable historical shortcomings. World War II's largest aircraft carrier, Japan's *Shinano*, had been in service for only ten days when it was sunk by four torpedo hits from a single American submarine. [See "The Sinking of a Supercarrier," Joseph Enright and James Ryan, May 1987.] In Vietnam, despite operating in an environment free of submarines and, for the most part, free of fighter aircraft, U.S. carrier airwings hardly altered the war's outcome—but did produce scores of POWs. Limited uses of U.S. carriers in Grenada and Lebanon, and the use of an Argentine carrier in the Falklands, were likewise ineffectual.

These instances of vulnerability and inefficiency suggest that the *Nimitz*-class big-deck carriers the Navy wants won't be useful in many of the scenarios it must plan for. As far as the strategic nuclear environment goes, it is hard to see their advantage. The Soviets' development of a worldwide reconnaissance system, cruise missiles, and a substantial ocean-going, blue-water navy has largely negated any pre-existing American edge.

During my own service as a naval officer in the late seventies and early eighties I participated in some exercises where, in theory at least, my carrier battle group arrived undetected at a point in the ocean from which it could launch raids against Soviet targets. But we probably never did get close enough to pull off an airstrike that would truly work. ("Probably" because, happily, our work remained in the realm of simulation, as all such exercises do. No one knows for sure what would really happen.) Invariably, the flying distance required complicated refueling plans, and, in order to conserve fuel, these bomber routes would be at very high and hence very detectable altitudes. When we practiced long-range strikes against non-Soviet targets, we ran into the same kinds of problems. In addition, no naval aircraft has electronics immune to the debilitating electromagnetic pulse produced by nuclear explosions.

Since stationing tanker airplanes along flight routes would be enormously difficult during battle, many of these sorties would wind up being one-way missions—recovering on land or ditching in the sea after bomb delivery. Even supposing round-trip missions could be pulled off, the carrier may well be located and sunk any time *after* the raid launches, because, while carriers have a hard time hiding from the Soviets under the best of circumstances, they become much more detectable once planes start operating. So even if inland targets get hit, you might still lose the subsequent use of an entire airwing. So in all-out and anti-Soviet scenarios, supercarriers look to be a one-shot deal. It seems that the Navy quietly admitted as much when some years ago it pretty much dropped carriers from our first-line nuclear war plans.

The old joke is that the reason you build aircraft carriers is so you can put planes on them to keep them from getting sunk. Because of the difficulties facing them, our carriers have come to resemble this punch line. Naval aviators proudly think of the 86-plane airwing as the carrier's "main battery," but much of that air strength has gone over to defending the carrier. It used to be that a carrier's fighter complement—the Hellcats, the Corsairs, the Panthers, the Phantoms—could sling bombs and rockets underneath. But the 20 F-14 fighters onboard today's carriers carry no air-to-surface weapons (save for an extremely short-range gun). Instead, they carry air-to-air weapons designed to stave off fighters and bombers that might attack the carrier. The five aircraft that jam enemy radar and the five planes we use to provide our own radar are likewise impotent. Ditto for the ten antisubmarine planes and the eight antisubmarine/search-and-rescue helicopters. That leaves only 38 planes—A-6, A-7, and F/A-18 bombers—for enemy ships and installations to worry about. In other words, as an offensive threat, a navy supercarrier is only about 44 percent efficient.

Gas money

Despite these drawbacks, there remains some evidence that carriers can be useful in limited, tactical fighting. Indeed, the Soviets seem to recognize this. At a shipyard on the Black Sea, they are now completing their second medium-sized, U.S.-style aircraft carrier. (The first was finished in 1985, but it's still not deployed.) These new vessels have catapults for launching heavy aircraft, arresting-gear for landing them, and angled decks that allow carriers to launch and land aircraft at the same time—features U.S. carriers have had for a generation. The Soviets evidently believe that in a crisis, where only a limited bit of hell is breaking loose, one piece at a time—and where the theater of operations is bereft of hostile submarines—carriers can provide military power and a visually striking symbol of national presence, without depending on foreign basing arrangements.

But there are factors that impugn the need for big-deck, nuclear-powered carriers like the *Nimitz*-class.

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Much of the huge expense of a *Nimitz*-class carrier stems from the cost of its nuclear power plants. The argument in favor of this kind of propulsion is that it can go 13 years between refuelings. But since most of a carrier battle group's elements aren't nuclear-powered, what good is this? All the escorts—the battleships, the cruisers, the destroyers, the frigates—must refuel every week or so. And the planes on board a carrier guzzle fuel at about the same rate.

With its airplanes, a *Nimitz*-class carrier costs at least $5 billion. This drains capital from training, testing, parts, and maintenance. Amazingly, it's not uncommon for navy squadrons to cut back their flight hours drastically or even to be grounded due to the scarcity of aviation fuel near the end of a fiscal quarter. This even happens to squadrons already at sea. Several times during my carrier service we had to drop anchor and wait for more fuel money. I'd much rather have "less capable" carriers with more readiness. A gassed-up VW beats a bone-dry Corvette off the line every time.

One reason for the calamities aboard the *Stark* (hit by an Iraqi plane) and the *Vincennes* (which accidentally downed an Iranian 747) was that they found themselves operating in the Persian Gulf without any air support from a carrier. [See "Why Did the Navy Shoot Down 290 Civilians?" Scott Shuger, October 1988] That's because the Navy is loath to deploy carriers to bodies of water it considers too small—where it fears they can become trapped. Thus these two most recent U.S. naval disasters clearly illustrate what we might call the paradox of the "high value unit": if a weapon is considered too valuable to lose, it is often considered too valuable to *use*. This is like having a couch so expensive, everyone is afraid to sit on it.

A prominent proposal to make naval airpower more practical and cost-effective has been the mid-size or "Gary Hart" carrier—a conventionally powered smaller carrier. While this might work in a world with honest contractors and no interservice rivalries, it's likely that, in this world, any such ship will end up being a high value unit anyway.

The real solution was showcased in the Falklands war—the only comprehensive naval action since World War II. At the center of the British naval force were two small, straight-deck carriers supporting Harrier vertical/short-take-off-and-landing (VSTOL) jets, which don't require a catapult because they take off almost as vertically as helicopters. Such a simplified airwing—far simpler than that which would operate from a "Gary Hart" carrier—can still perform a wide variety of operations. In the Falklands, the British had these planes flying air-defense and ground-support missions, as well as helicopters providing antisubmarine protection and search-and-rescue missions. The results were impressive: Harriers destroyed 26 Argentine aircraft in exchange for only two losses due to enemy action, and their cluster-bombs and rockets helped crumble opposing army units. (This success was due, at least in part, to the absence of a credible Argentine submarine threat.)

The U.S. Navy already has 12 similar VSTOL/helo carriers (and is hoping to build two more), but because naval planners are so enthralled/paralyzed by big carriers and the kind of aircraft that needs a big flight deck, it limits them to the very ancillary role of supporting marine amphibious assaults. Amazingly, it could probably build eight or ten more of them for the price of the two proposed nuclear big-decks. (Since it's politically infeasible nowadays to call any ships "Gary Hart" carriers, perhaps we can think of these as "Donna Rice" carriers—capable of causing some trouble and unimportant enough to be used.) The resultant force of 20 small carriers would give the U.S. Navy plenty of usable Falklands-style power for limited battles using conventional weapons without wasting assets on big, strategic nuclear scenarios against the Soviets in which naval air power no longer makes much sense.

Phoenix and Midway

What about the planes that the Navy is requesting, those F/A-18s and F-14s? Were the Navy to switch over to a VSTOL/helo small carrier force, it wouldn't need more F/A-18s and F-14s. But even if big-deck carriers are retained, there are grounds for concern about the particular aircraft the Navy wants.

It's true, the F/A-18 is faster and more maneuverable than the A-7 bomber it is replacing. It has an advanced "heads-up" cockpit design, where the gauges are displayed as part of the windshield. It has a better radar. And unlike the A-7, it is twin-engined—making it more survivable and thus better for long operations over open oceans. These are the fighter-style features that make it fun to fly, but the shortcomings of the F/A-18 have been clear for some time. [See "Dress Blues and Bleeding Mohawks," Scott Shuger, October 1983.] As a bomber, it's a big step backwards because it *carries fewer bombs* than the A-7 and can only carry them about *half as far*. The Navy has tried to solve the problem, but there's no quick fix. Outfitting the F/A-18 with external fuel tanks hampers its bomb capacity and hinders its much-vaunted maneuverability. Shortening all scheduled carrier flights to accommodate the F/A-18's poorer endurance restricts the range of the entire airwing. Here is another instance where the Navy "modern-

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ized" and lost punch.

The manufacturer of the A-7, LTV, has put forward several programs to upgrade its engine, electronics, maneuverability, and survivability at about one-third the cost of an F/A-18. This isn't nearly as exciting as buying a new plane, but it makes more sense.

The F-14 that the Navy wants more of is a formidable aircraft. It has the best fighter radar there is (because of its long-range detection, Iranians successfully used it as an early warning plane). It has the longest-range fighter weapon—the Phoenix missile. Its variable geometry wing gives it an unrivaled combination of performance and "station time," the ability to stay aloft for long periods. But there are still big problems.

The old joke is that an aircraft carrier is a ship equipped with planes whose purpose is to keep it from being sunk. Because of the difficulties facing them, our carriers have come to resemble this punch line.

Despite the fact that *one-on-one* the F-14 can probably beat any fighter in the world (with the possible exception of the U.S. Air Force F-15 and F-16), it's hard to see how that's relevant to combat against the Soviets, whose fighter planes outnumber ours somewhere between *six and seven to one*. (This includes the obsolescent and obsolete planes they keep operational.) Unlike the Libyans, the Soviets won't settle for even odds.

Furthermore, the plane is advertised as being preeminent in air-to-air combat against other planes and in defending a ship against cruise missiles or bombers—but it's very difficult to carry out both missions simultaneously. If the F-14 carries all or mostly Phoenix missiles for its mission of shooting down bombers or the antiship cruise missiles they carry—it can carry up to six of these huge things—it must sacrifice all or some of its short- and medium-range missiles, and also lose a good deal of its maneuverability.

But suppose we are in the Pacific, where Soviet missiles pose an enormous threat to our carriers. And suppose that we have three carriers deployed there. Further suppose that all 60 of the F-14s are "mission capable" and each is fully loaded with six Phoenix missiles. On the best estimates available, the Soviets have at least 350-400 antiship cruise missiles launchable from the bombers of their Pacific fleet alone. That means it's not unlikely that a few air-launched cruise missiles will score nuclear hits on carriers in such an all-out scenario even if every navy F-14 pilot has a perfect day.

There are some features of the situation that make it hard to accept even this optimistic an outcome. First, I have never witnessed or heard of an F-14 squadron with all its planes "up" at once. Second, one of those carriers deployed in the Pacific Fleet is likely to be the *Midway*, which, due to its smaller flight-deck and hangar, doesn't have any F-14s. Third, it's more than a little reasonable to expect that in any such scenario the Soviets will also be shooting at our carriers with sub-launched and surface-launched antiship missiles, not just those from bombers. And fourth, and perhaps most relevant to any discussion of the budget, the Phoenix missile is so expensive—costing $1 million apiece—that carrier airwings don't carry enough of them to outfit each of their F-14s with six.

If we are going to spend more money for fighters based on carriers, we should go to something with the air-to-air capability of the F-14, which is due largely to the superb heat-seeking Sidewinder. But we should probably cancel the Sparrow missile, which imposes maneuvering restrictions on the aircraft launching it and which is vulnerable to countermaneuvers and electronic countermeasures. And we would be better off without the impractical weight and expense of the Phoenix missile.

Money well spent

Let's turn now to submarines. This is probably an area where the Navy should spend heavily, although in a somewhat different fashion than is currently being suggested. The simple fact, of course, is that submarines are much, much harder to detect than surface ships. "There are two kinds of ships," say the sub guys, "submarines and targets." I've seen enough photos of American carriers through periscope crosshairs—most sub crew offices feature one—to become a believer. Despite all the antisubmarine warfare (ASW) equipment that carrier groups take with them to sea, in my own experience most exercises against subs ended up with my carrier getting a green flare at close quarters, the standard simulation for a successful torpedo or cruise missile attack.

There are two important corollaries of the sub-

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marine's stealth. First, it follows that no matter how sophisticated and expensive, submarines are quite generally *not* high value units—we can afford to use them because we aren't as likely to lose them. In other words, firepower put on a submarine is *more efficient* than that put on anything else. That's one reason why the Navy's recent trend of putting Harpoon and Tomahawk cruise missiles on attack submarines is a good move. If these weapons are worthwhile—and the evidence is that the Russians respect them tremendously—then they should be put where they'll do the most good.

The second consequence is of particular importance for strategic scenarios. Let's say that any feature of a weapon system that tends to discourage potential adversaries from starting a war or escalating one already in progress is "stabilizing" and that any feature that would encourage them to do so is "destabilizing." Having most of our strategic warheads on virtually impossible-to-find submarines is quite stabilizing—since the Soviets don't know where they are, they're less likely to launch against them. Putting a weapon on a submarine enhances its stabilizing features more than putting it on anything else.

Money spent on submarines is as well spent as money gets at the Pentagon. But this doesn't mean that all of the proposed sub programs should be sacrosanct. For instance, although nuclear power makes much more sense for subs than surface ships—since they operate pretty independently, they aren't hampered by a conventionally powered entourage—and although nuke-powered subs are getting quieter all the time, they still aren't the quietest subs. No, that accolade goes to diesel/electric boats running on batteries. Now these conventional designs don't have the operating range that nukes have and hence would be suited only for roles where range doesn't matter—say, a patrol off Norfolk or a minelaying operation in the Dardanelles Straits near the Black Sea. But the importance of those missions is a good reason to build non-nuke subs.

Right now, the U.S. Navy has only four diesel subs, none of them state-of-the-art combat vessels. We currently depend on the diesel subs of our allies to perform the missions diesels do best. It's foolish to rely on the British, German, and Italian navies for our security. There are crucial scenarios in which having friends with diesels won't do us much good. The Soviets maintain missile sub patrols off both our coasts, and we can't expect Britain to help us patrol them. The closeness of Russian "boomers" to our shores positions them to fire first-strike salvos with only a fraction of the warning time we'd get on their ICBMs. This is dangerously destabilizing.

The best response to this would be to fill the waters close to our shores with super-quiet diesel/electric boats, watching for the slightest indication of launch by those Russian subs. Also, conventionally powered subs require fewer men, and their crews don't have to undergo as much time-consuming and expensive physics and engineering training. And if a submarine is simpler to operate, crew members can concentrate more on *tactics*. It's long been suspected that the Navy's nearly all-nuke sub force is very strong on running submarines but not as strong as it should be on *fighting* with them. (As a response to this problem, we should consider the British navy's approach—maintaining two different classes of submarine officer, a general officer specializing in tactics and operations, and an engineering officer specializing in power plants.)

Spit and shoestring

Although the *Seawolf* does represent some advances over the current U.S. front-line nuclear attack sub, the *Los Angeles*-class—it has upgraded sonar, more torpedo tubes, and is equipped for under-ice operations—if we eliminated the *Seawolf* or cut back on it, we could build many more diesel/electrics, since they cost only about *one-fourth* as much. Given the resultant gains in strategic stability, independence from our allies, and tactical crew talent, this seems like a good trade.

Because the chief strategic value of submarines is that they enhance whatever stabilizing features a

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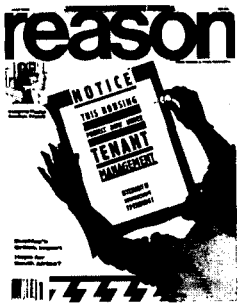

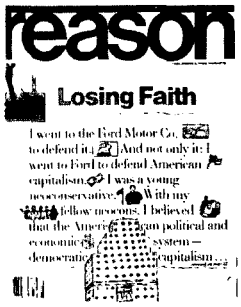

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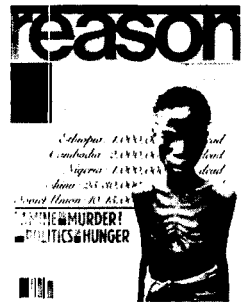

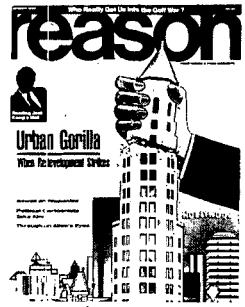

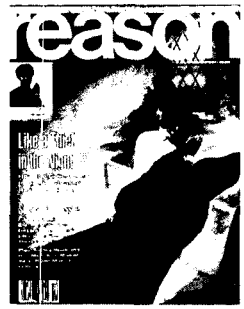

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Outfitting the F/A-18 with external fuel tanks hampers its ability to carry bombs and hinders its much-vaunted maneuverability. Here is another instance where the Navy "modernized" and lost its punch.

weapon has, we need to think more carefully about strategic subs. The present development of the *Ohio*-class sub and its D5 ballistic missile incorporates several principal changes over earlier systems: increased missile range (from 4,500 to 6,000 nautical miles), increased missile accuracy (from being able to hit a city to being able to hit a missile silo), increased missiles per sub (up from 16 on the Poseidon missile boats to 24 on the *Ohio*-class), and increased warheads per missile (from eight to ten, with the built-in possibility of going up to 14).

Of these features, only the first—increased missile range—is stabilizing. If your subs can hit the enemy's targets from farther away, there is more ocean for the subs to hide in. The upshot is that the enemy is that much less encouraged to try a first strike, since retaliation is ensured. But increasing the accuracy of a missile actually harms stability. If you make sub-launched missiles accurate enough to hit nuclear weapons sites, rather than accurate enough just to hit sprawling population centers, the enemy becomes jittery. If he knows you have lots of virtually impossible-to-find weapons targeted at the bulk of his nuclear arsenal, then (especially in a crisis) his fear of losing it altogether tempts him to launch his nuclear weapons first. And increasing the number of warheads per sub is also problematic. Submarine commanders know that no matter how stealthy their boats are in general, once they launch at least one missile they will be much easier to find. So they are inclined to fire *all* their missiles if they are inclined to fire *any*. Subjecting more warheads to this logic heightens the rate at which a nuclear war would accelerate.

Attention should also be drawn to a curious feature of the Navy's current attempts to improve the wartime survivability of its ballistic missile submarine command, control, and communications (C3). While it is quite generally true that in the U.S. military, combat C3 has been horribly neglected and stands in need of great repair, here is a case where the neglect is *stabilizing*. As long as C3 with our missile subs remains at the spit-and-shoestring level, the Soviets know that if they were to decapitate the U.S. civilian and military authorities preemptively they would suffer the response of a basically unlocatable fleet of autonomous sub commanders who would attack their targets as soon as they stopped hearing from home. This fact makes such preemptive strikes less attractive to them.

Guerrillas and redcoats

In effect then, the *Ohio*-class submarine and supporting programs aren't adding to stability. Here is a sobering example where technological changes have been adopted not because they further military goals but simply because the technology exists.

We could get back to pure strategic strength if we opted for a submarine force with the following features: long-range missiles, the longer the better, but with decreased accuracy, fewer warheads per submarine, but more missile-bearing submarines.

As for new surface ships, while there's still room in a modern navy for them, I don't think there's much for the likes of the *Ticonderoga*-class and *Burke*-class Aegis radar ships. For all their gee-whiz equipment, they won't really be capable of acting independently without air cover. The *Vincennes*, a *Ticonderoga*-class ship, and the *Stark* already showed that. And a surface ship is not the best anti-submarine platform—another submarine is. Nor is it the best device for shooting down planes—another plane is. In most scenarios, these fancy ships will fall prey to all the (far cheaper) cruise missiles and torpedoes out there. Once again the Falklands war is instructive—of the 29 surface ships in the British task force, five were sunk and seven others were damaged—a casualty rate of 41 percent. On the other hand, it is possible to build surface ships that are more like guerrillas and less like redcoats—well-armed, high-speed, highly maneuverable, small

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craft. Strap on a small gun, some cruise and anti-air missiles and you have something that in reasonable numbers can cause some real trouble. Just ask the U.S. carrier pilots who tried, without much luck, to sink Vietnamese and Cambodian gunboats. Or the navy investigators who found that the *Vincennes*'s troubles with Iranian gunboats contributed to its miscalculations about the Airbus. Most of the navies of the world have good stocks of these craft. The Soviets have more than 500 of them. We have seven. There is no reason why the U.S. Navy has a crappier small-boat fleet than your average Colombian drug dealer.

In his just-published book on his years as Reagan's secretary of the Navy, John Lehman defends his opposition to what he describes as the "whole trendy school of military reform . . . [built] around the ideas that complexity and technology were bad and that simplicity and cheapness were good." He argues: "The tremendous American edge in technology is an inherent advantage provided by our culture and our economic system. We must build to this advantage, not trade it away for cheaper, smaller, less capable ships and aircraft and weapons built in greater numbers, which is the forte of a totalitarian, centralized, Gosplan economy." This reference to the Soviets is the worst kind of fallacy—like saying that because the Nazis introduced jets and rockets, we shouldn't have them. In light of the raft of techno-troubles bedeviling the Navy that Lehman bought us, we need to think much more carefully about the Navy his successors want to buy us next. □

The Worst City Government

If you thought the government of the Virgin Islands was unwise to hire personnel consultants from the D.C. government, think about China. In 1987, the People's Republic hosted Gwynne Washington, an assistant director of D.C.'s Department of Corrections, which last year allowed 18 escapes. Asking the District for advice on prison security is like asking Mother Teresa for tips on birth control.

The first lesson that D.O.C. officials might have offered is semantics. On the night of January 19, inmates at Lorton prison burned down the administration building. Many of us might call this a riot. Not Hallem Williams. "It was not a riot," said the director of corrections. "It was a fire with opportunistic vandalism and a murder. . . ."

"Our management is sound," said Williams. But a 1987 report by the National Institute of Corrections, a federal agency, found that Lorton guards had a habit of forgetting to lock the doors. It's no surprise, then, that three of the 18 escapees simply walked out. Our favorite: the armed robber who strolled out with his family as visiting hours ended. . . .

Nor does "sound management" leap to mind to describe the D.O.C.'s early release program to ease overcrowding. The delicate task of deciding which 800 inmates to return to the streets fell to low-level clerks with little training. "Nobody gave [us] any specific guidelines," one worker told *The Washington Post*. "It was catch-as-catch-can." Or can't.

It might have seemed logical for the parole board to make decisions about early release, but it was busy running a special rehabilitation program for ex-cons—well, for one ex-con anyway: Mayor Marion Barry's ex-wife, who served time for defrauding tenants of a D.C. housing project. She was paid $28,000 for a three-month study of the needs of women inmates. . . .

The security at Lorton might seem impressive compared to that at Oak Hill, the District's maximum security facility for young offenders, run by the city's Youth Services Administration. In 1987, 25 percent of the inmates escaped, including two convicted of murder. Investigators from the U.S. Department of Education found that a $200,000 education program was "almost nonexistent." And this winter, a court-appointed monitor found the prison infested with rats and snakes and the inmates "entirely out of underwear."

Meanwhile, more than 6,000 city employees—roughly one in seven—make more than $40,000 a year, according to David Clarke, chairman of the D.C. city council. "Like those of us on perpetual diets know so well," he said, "obesity is often reflected by a bulging middle". . . .

Second place this month goes to Chicago, where, the *Chicago Tribune* reports, about $70 million in parking fines remain uncollected because the 11 city agencies that control them can't coordinate. But not to worry. Several city council members have proposed a new system—complete with a provision to grant themselves immunity from parking fines. . . .

—*Katherine Boo*

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The Impossible Life of a College President

You think it's a life of oak panels and big ideas. It's more like being a PAC fundraiser.

by Julie Rose

It's the kind of fantasy that might creep through the cabin of the Eastern Shuttle just after take-off. As harried professionals unlock leather briefcases, pour Canadian Club, and gaze sternly at ledger sheets and legal briefs, minds begin to wander. *It's 8:30 p.m.—puts me in at National at 10:00, the Hilton at 10:45, it'll take two more hours to pull the presentation together, and, Jesus, I've got to be sharp at that 7:30 breakfast when I make my pitch.* ("Another Canadian Club, please.") *Why do I live like this?*

As bankers, lawyers, and bureaucratic brass ponder their overworked bodies and underfed souls, The Fantasy takes shape: *If only I were president...*

Of a college, that is.

It's not that spending ten hours a day with the tax code has lost its appeal, exactly. It's just that after a few decades of power and money, it's time for something more, well, cerebral. *Soulful.* A college presidency seems like a dream job. It's a life of books. A world of libraries, quadrangles, and faculty clubs; of robes, ceremonies, and honorary degrees. A chance to ask the big questions, like what was Proust trying to say with the *madeleine* anyway? But the city lights rising up below push the fantasy aside, for now at least, and the life of briefcases and 15-minute billable bytes returns.

Now meet Mary Maples Dunn, president of Smith College and no stranger to the billable time-byte herself. She's got the robes and the degrees, but in substance her life seems little different than those the harried professionals dream about fleeing. She's on her own time now, away from the campus on holiday, visiting a friend of a friend when the Jasper Johns catches her eye. It's just one of a number of the home's striking works of contemporary art, and Dunn listens attentively as her hostess describes her collection. Then, for Dunn, her hostess gets to the most important part: her one great ambition left in life is to finish her baccalaureate. Dunn leaves the conversation with the impression that this woman had even attended Smith for a year. It is all she needs to hear.

Back at her desk a few weeks later, Dunn is meeting with Smith's new museum director, Ed Nygren. It is a day in early December in which Dunn has let me sit in on her many meetings on campus. At the moment, Dunn is a little flustered. She is trying to describe to Nygren her hostess's collection. The whole house had a feeling of, mmm, the minimalist to it. No, no, she says, shaking her head. Realizing her description can't convey what she saw, she admits that she knows very little about art.

She knows quite a bit more, however, about fundraising, and she reaches quickly for the book to her right, a thick, thumbed volume: the Smith College alumni directory. She glances for the woman's last name and does not find it. Maybe it's under her maiden name, Dunn muses. More important, maybe she feels enough fondness for Smith to donate a painting or two, perhaps even some cash (a prospect that would grow more likely were the woman, with a little encouragement, to return to finish her degree). Completing the background check, however, is someone else's job. For the moment, Dunn has done her work—she went off for a drink with a few friends and unearthed a prospective donor.

She and Nygren press on to another subject—gifts already given. There is the presentation of the painting by George Inness that should be arriving soon. It is an important work; better yet, it arrived with

Julie Rose is a Northampton writer.

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a $100,000 donation. Dunn asks Nygren to drum up a little fanfare at the museum gallery to honor the donor. They speak of donors and potential donors; they thumb through the alumni directory a few more times. At one point the director assures Dunn that he has told a prospective donor that the prints she wants to give are not in lieu of giving money to the capital campaign. "The shadow loves you," Dunn murmurs with a laugh.

The shadow for Mary Dunn—and most of today's college presidents—is the constant specter of money. For Dunn's eye is caught not only by great paintings but by any cash donation that may come her way. In fact, she must raise $6 million in the next three months to meet a deadline for the construction of a new $12 million science center. ("I think we'll die first," she says.) And that's just one small part of Smith's five-year campaign to raise $125 million—a goal that has dominated much of Dunn's presidency since it began in 1985. This is an enormous fundraising effort for a school whose enrollment has never exceeded 3,000 students, and in the past month-and-a-half it has kept Dunn on the road almost 50 percent of the time.

Is this really any way to run an academic institution? The job of college president should involve a large amount of intellectual leadership, including recruiting talented faculty, weeding out tenured deadwood, and championing curricular reforms. (See "How to Be a College President," page 20) Instead of having time to pursue this intellectual grail, most college presidents are left dashing for the Eastern Shuttle in pursuit of the next big deal.

Antisemites and backwoods boys

American university presidents haven't always been too busy to think about education. During the latter part of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century there were presidents whose leadership, intellectual and otherwise, was never in question: Charles Eliot of Harvard (1869-1909); William Harper of the University of Chicago (1891-1906); Woodrow Wilson of Princeton (1902-1910); and Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia (1902-1945), among others.

To be sure, their success was due in part to the moment. Gone were the ecclesiastical ties that had bound many institutions from their founding in the 17th century through the Civil War. American industrialists were pouring their fortunes into new schools—the University of Chicago, Stanford, Johns Hopkins.

But it wasn't just the times; the men left their mark as well. At the University of Chicago, Robert Hutchins (1929-1951) established the Great Books program, which today deserves emulation. His contemporary, Nicholas Murray Butler, saved Lionel Trilling's job at Columbia by intervening with the WASPish English department dons who wanted to deny Trilling tenure because he was a Jew. True, these and other presidents also had power that is unknown today. Woodrow Wilson could dismiss faculty at will.

Today, presidential leadership may seem less monumental, but it can still be strong. Take, for example, John Sawyer of Williams College (1961-1973), who rid the school of its backwoods boys club image by dispensing with the entrenched fraternity system and admitting women.

Instead of having time to pursue the intellectual grail, most college presidents are left dashing for the Eastern Shuttle in pursuit of the next big deal.

More often, however, the race for funds has become the *sine qua non* of the academic institution. More than 60 of the nation's colleges are now trying to raise more than $100 million each for what are called "capital campaigns." And the presidents of three universities—Stanford, Boston University, and New York University—are each seeking more than *$1 billion*. Some are on a continual fundraising roll; when B.U. reached its goal of $200 million a year ahead of schedule, John Silber, the university's president, immediately set his sights on $1 billion by the year 2000. In opening the drive, Silber said that B.U. could "stand still or go ahead. We're at the takeoff point to become one of the ten best universities in the nation." Silber talks about education the way many college presidents do: "best," they imply, gets measured in money, not knowledge.

When governing boards go hunting for presidents, it's often the candidates' fundraising, rather than academic, talents that catch the eye. Such might have been the case in 1984, when the regents of the University of Texas began a search to replace Peter Flawn, the retiring president of U.T. Austin. In the end, the choice came down to two candidates, both at U.T. Austin: Gerry Fonken, vice president for academic affairs and research, and William Cunningham, the dean of the business school. While Cunningham, whose doctorate was in marketing, had all the seemingly essential exterior graces, he was viewed as no great intellect by the faculty. But Cunningham had done a terrific job raising funds for

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the business school. If he could sell the mission of the business school, why not the whole university?

Butterflies and massages

The college president's life is, of course, going to be more fragmented and frustrating than The Fantasy allows. College presidents, not without a trace of self-pity, liken themselves to mayors. Joseph Duffy, chancellor of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, says his job includes, among other things, running a bus line and providing housing, food, and custodial services. In addition, presidents almost inevitably play a role in the life of the town where their institution is located. And, as if that didn't tax their time, few can resist invitations to sit on corporate boards, another prestige-enhancer. Some brave ones, like Dunn, will even try to teach a course, but it's usually a short-lived attempt. "I don't read as much [in her field of American colonial history] as I used to," she said. "I am not prepared enough."

This potpourri of prosaic presidential concerns inevitably breeds frustration. "Fragmentation" is how Peter Pouncey, president of Amherst College, describes it. "It's a great job for the butterfly-minded," he says. "You get to do something for about a minute and a quarter." Adele Simmons, until recently president of Hampshire College, says being a college president means thinking in 15-minute segments. And, sure enough, Simmons thinks that way—as she ran down for me the many activities of her day, her schedule included time for a massage.

The mayor analogy becomes even more apt when you realize that college presidents must cope with

How To Be a College President

The Editors

Redefining the role of a college president would entail ridicule and resistance. But it's unlikely that the next Robert Hutchins can spend half of his or her time milking alums and still secure the reforms that campuses need.

Such as:

►**Make faculty members teach more.** When Nicholas Murray Butler rescued Lionel Trilling from the bigotry of the Columbia English department in the 1930s, top professors were spending about 15 hours a week in the classroom. Today, at most major institutions, they spend about five. Presidential pressure to put scholars back in the classroom could curb the undue emphasis on publishing and the concomitant explosion of obscure, jargon-ridden journals. Moreover, the more teachers teach, the farther a department's budget would go—and the less time college presidents would have to spend with hat in hand.

►**Cut tenured positions by two-thirds.** Tenure was meant to safeguard independence. Today it typically safeguards indolence.

True, tenure can protect iconoclasts and give the university a core protected from fad and fashion; we wouldn't want to reinstate the total hire-and-fire powers that Woodrow Wilson had as president of Princeton. But today's blanketed tenure is worse than the disease it aims to cure, leaving many departments choked with deadwood. With as many as 80 percent of faculty tenured at many schools, a two-thirds cut would suit most campuses fine.

►**Actively recruit young scholars.** Frank Cashen didn't take the New York Mets from the cellar to the series simply by boosting cash flow. And he didn't just buy big-name players. Knowing stars when he saw them—and before others saw them—he signed a teamful of Dwight Goodens and Lenny Dykstras: obscure talents destined for big things. College presidents ought to have the same approach to scouting talent and pursue young scholars with the passion they currently reserve for donors.

►**Reform curricula, with a heavier emphasis on the Great Books.** The erosion of requirements means that even the brightest students at the best schools have gaping holes in their education. As Leon Botstein, president of Bard College, recently wrote in *The New York Times*, freshmen at toney Middlebury can now choose between Shakespeare and "Literary California." To fulfill an expository writing requirement, the Wellesley student can delve into a course that asks "Why is Donald Duck so much smarter than the criminal Beagle Boys?" A pressing issue, no doubt, but perhaps weightier issues get aired in *Romeo and Juliet* or *Paradise Lost*.

►**Improve the quality of teaching.** With all the pressure to publish, what increasingly perishes is concern for classroom exchange. It brings no additional pay, garners no renown, and counts precious little toward tenure. Alan Brinkley, a celebrated teacher, was recently denied tenure by the Harvard history department, despite consistent rave reviews from students. Surely there's

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something wrong with an academic culture that places greater value on publishing papers like "The Core and Stability of Group Choice in Spatial Voting Games" in the *American Political Science Review*, which five or six scholars might read, than on the teaching that can awaken young minds.

The Washington Monthly has long promoted one such approach—the case study method—that could help rescue political science (and much of history) from dreary quantitative oblivion. Rather than running regression analyses, political scientists should be leading their students through the nuances of real political events, teasing forth the lessons. A comparison of the Kennedy administration's behavior during the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis—and what it shows about the need for skepticism toward the bureaucratic chain of command—has more to teach than 100 number-crunching studies.

►**End corruption in sports.** Like homelessness, the corruption of big-school athletics is now so common that it's lost its ability to shock. With pressure for Heismans and Division I championships so strong—a winning team makes it easier to raise funds not only for the gym but for libraries and computer labs—the president needs to lay down a zero-tolerance policy in the athletic department. One who did was Eamon Kelly, president of Tulane. When members of the basketball team were caught shaving points in exchange for cash, Kelly shut down the basketball program for a few years—and weathered the resulting alumni heat. Most college presidents are more inclined toward expressing "concern" and convening committees. They need to incline towards real academic programs that guarantee student athletes make it.

►**Revolutionize student aid.** Nothing fuels the angst of the middle class quite like the prospect of financing a college education. Or three. Or five. Meanwhile, the student-loan sports car, like the Welfare Cadillac, has entered contemporary folklore to boost almost everyone's skepticism about government help. There's a way out: offer government guarantees for long-term loans (30 years or more) from private banks. In the event of default, the money can be recouped through income tax assessments. It would cost taxpayers nothing, and it would spread out the repayment time—which is usually ten years after graduation—into years when the former student has higher earnings.

The result would be good for families: Mom and Dad would be free of the guilt and worry that often tether them to unsatisfying work in order to finance Junior's diploma. It would be good for Junior, too: with the money coming out of his own pocket, he'd likely pay more attention to questions of whether, when, and what to study. And it'd be good for the colleges: Junior himself might take a more skeptical view of those tenured dinosaurs when he realizes their cushions are being financed by his earnings. While university presidents often justify their dollar-chasing by citing the need for scholarships, here's a way to really expand educational opportunity.

►**Reflag a V.P.** Rather than have subordinates making crucial academic decisions while presidents are off chasing dollars, wouldn't it make more sense to designate a subordinate the chief fundraiser? He or she will need a fancy title and a big salary, perhaps even bigger than the president's, in order to impress potential donors. (More doors will open for "Chancellor Smith," than they will for "Mr. Smith, vice president for development.") But reflagging a v.p. or two is a small price to pay in order to keep the president in home port.

►**Restrain salaries.** Sure, some academics, particularly junior faculty, are underpaid. But the number of well-paid administrators is soaring on many campuses. And, cries of genteel poverty notwithstanding, many professors have it pretty good. Stars at big-name schools now regularly top $100,000, and the *average* college professor, including those at community colleges, pulls in $37,000. But wait—that's for only eight months' work. On a yearly basis, then, the average professor earns $51,800 from teaching. And that's not counting outside income, like publications and consulting fees. (In 1984, *The American Lawyer* reported that Lawrence Tribe, a Harvard Law professor, had netted at least $240,000 in outside fees. Tribe, of course, is an extreme example, but such "consulting" is an increasingly common faculty pursuit.) Nor does that figure count the tuition subsidies, sometimes up to 100 percent, that many universities offer faculty children. Or all those nice athletic facilities. Or the sabbaticals. Or the housing subsidies many schools provide. Or the chance to lead those student tours of Florence. Sound tough?

But how to restrain faculty salaries and still attract those rising academic stars? Offer them something that even billion-dollar endowments don't necessarily buy: a place where the essential currency of education—ideas—can thrive. But don't look to college presidents to turn things around. They're too busy dialing for dollars.□

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a number of constituencies—students, faculty, alumni, the board of trustees, and the public. All want a piece of the president's day. "Each group could create gridlock for a president," says one former dean. "There are faculty who come for one hour to converse about the geology department's postal budget." Where college presidents differ from mayors, however, is this: only one group of constituents vote. "A president conceives of his or her constituency as the board of trustees that hired them," the dean said. "This helps to explain why presidents of colleges with academic backgrounds find themselves acting as chief executive officers, responding to the nonacademic parts of the college."

Dunn harrumphs again, explaining it's just a committee to discuss how to plan, as opposed to actually planning.

No wonder, then, that when Clark Kerr, the former president of the University of California, conducted a study for the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in 1986, he found that 50 percent of the traditional candidates for the top college job—provosts, deans, and vice presidents for academic affairs—didn't want it. Kerr calls them "refusniks." Why would they turn it down? "The position of president has deteriorated," said one typical respondent. "It mostly involves raising money and recruiting students."

If the life of a college president is inevitably distracting, it becomes frenetic when the trustees saddle presidents with wildly ambitious fundraising goals. There are at least two solutions. One is for other administrators or the trustees, who now perform considerable fundraising work, to take on even more. The second line of attack—tougher to initiate but potentially transforming—is to rethink how much money colleges really need.

No one expects that running an institution is a low-budget affair. The costs are real and escalating. Money stocks the library, stokes the boilers, hires the faculty, modernizes the computers. It provides aid to students who otherwise would be unable to attend. And universities correctly argue that they've been hurt by declining federal support, including the erosion of financial aid for needy students during the Reagan years, and the "capital starvation" that has resulted in deterioration of research facilities.

But federal cutbacks alone can't account for the rampant tuition inflation of the past decade. In 1987, a congressional study found that tuition at private and public universities during the 1980s grew at more than twice the rate of inflation. Since 1980, tuition and fees at Smith and other elite institutions have climbed more than 130 percent, to more than $16,000. With a record like that, the public—and college presidents—ought to be more skeptical about what constitutes a necessity.

Rather than exercising tough leadership to restrain costs, university presidents take to the road. Their fundraising pitch often sounds like that of Cold War generals justifying the arms race: we need more because the competition has more. Of the $125 million that Mary Maples Dunn is currently chasing, $6 million is for the indoor track and tennis facility. Another $450,000 will build an *indoor* riding arena. Why is this necessary? Because Smith's neighbor, Mount Holyoke, has just built the largest equestrian center in New England at a price of $1.8 million.

Listen to Smith's capital campaign brochure: "By the fall of 1985, most of the colleges that compete with Smith...had upgraded their athletic facilities....improving the college's facilities is critical if Smith is to attract these scholar-athletes." Never mind that the brochure also boasts that "Smith now provides the finest athletic facilities intended primarily for women anywhere in the world." How about a little educational leadership that says: "If you want to ride horses, join the rodeo; if you want to learn something, come to Smith?"

Even at universities with endowments worth hundreds of millions, or even billions, of dollars, the presidents I spoke with felt they could never stop raising money. They worried about inflation; that salaries, library, and maintenance costs would rise unchecked. Or, perhaps more troublesome, that they would fall behind in the race for the most up-to-date equipment, i.e. computers. But at least one college president, who declined to be quoted, thinks that colleges have enough for their current needs and beyond. "Many of these college presidents are like squirrels, putting nuts away for the future," he says.

There's another more personal motive driving the culture of college fundraising. It's a great way to be remembered. Take a recent news item about the retirement of Thomas Reynolds, who has been president of Bates College for the past 20 years. Reynolds is a fine academic who clearly strengthened the intellectual standards of the school. The item mentioned this fact in passing, dwelling instead on Reynolds's two successful capital campaigns.

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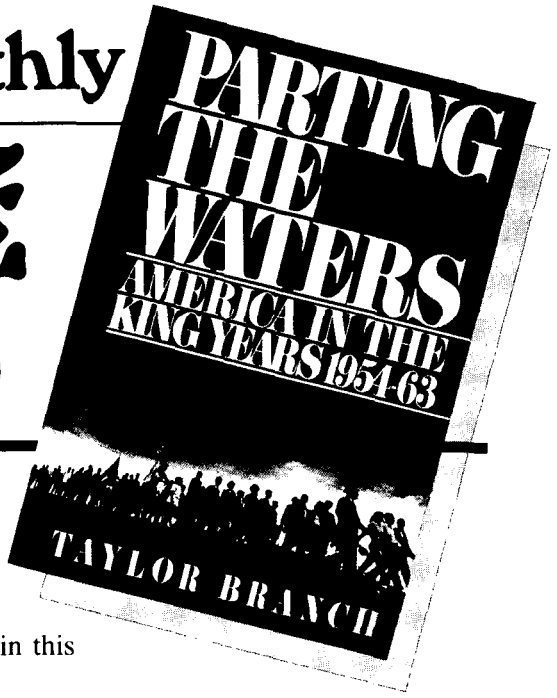
The Washington Monthly

ANNUAL POLITICAL BOOK AWARD



The political book award for 1988 goes to *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* by Taylor Branch. In a review of the book in this magazine, Jason DeParle wrote:

> "What's striking about Taylor Branch's terrific book is how mightily *uninevitable* King's victories seemed at the time. . . . Branch's meticulous research laces the saga with nuance and irony. There is news in his additions to the story of the FBI's dishonor, but much of the book's joy is simply in the reading. . . . Branch's prose shines."

RUNNERS UP

Laboratories of Democracy. David Osborne. *Harvard Business School Press.*

The Best Congress Money Can Buy. Philip M. Stern. *Pantheon.*

And the Wolf Finally Came: The Decline of the American Steel Industry. John P. Hoerr. *University of Pittsburgh Press.*

Sparrows Point: Making Steel—The Rise and Ruin of American Industrial Might. Mark Reutter. *Summit.*

Honest Graft: Big Money and the American Political Process. Brooks Jackson. *Knopf.*

What's Wrong with Wall Street: Short-term Gain and the Absentee Shareholder. Louis Lowenstein. *Addison-Wesley.*

A Fool and His Money: The Odyssey of an Average Investor. John Rothchild. *Viking.*

A Bright, Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam. Neil Sheehan. *Random House.*

Landslide: The Unmaking of the President, 1984-1988. Doyle McManus, Jane Mayer. *Houghton Mifflin.*

William F. Buckley Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives. John B. Judis. *Simon & Schuster.*

The Spy Who Got Away. David Wise. *Random House.*

Wild Blue Yonder: Money, Politics, and the B-1 Bomber. Nick Kotz. *Pantheon.*

Nowhere to Go: The Tragic Odyssey of the Homeless Mentally Ill. E. Fuller Torrey. *Harper and Row.*

Getting Better: Inside Alcoholics Anonymous. Nan Robertson. *Morrow.*

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Mary Maples Dunn is a woman of little pretense, but much presence. To some she has a grandmotherly aura, and it's easy to see. She is a short, ample woman in her late fifties, her snow-white hair done in an attractive bob. She wears sensible shoes. But this is also a woman who keeps her academic robes in her office coat closet and whisks around town in a red sports car. When I first met her, she had wandered back into her reception room, temporarily devoid of secretary, and was just finishing a cookie. She pleasantly waved me into her office. As she seems to do with most people, she insisted that I call her Mary. But Dunn also has a directness to her that belies her years in the trenches of academia—first as a history professor, then as a dean at Bryn Mawr. She can get to the point fast and has a wry sense of humor.

Day is Dunn

There must be days for Mary Dunn when raising money seems like the most interesting part of the job. For even when she escapes the fundraising pressures, she is typically cast as a glorious caretaker—battling not the intellectual challenges that might make a university soar but a phalanx of mundane concerns.

I suspect that the day I joined her is one of them. There is Dunn's meeting with the head of the athletic department, the czarina of the new indoor track, who wants to talk about drainage on the softball field. Dunn asks about changing around the weightlifting room to provide access for handicapped students. After the athletic director comes a sort of welcome lunch with two new faculty members from the art history department.

Back from lunch, Dunn meets with her dean of institutional affairs. It is a session that exhibits the bureaucratic bickering for which academics are so renowned. First there are the faculty members on the computer committee who are worried about how many administrators are on the committee. Dunn harrumphs, then growls that the faculty was doing the same kind of fussing over committee rights 15 years ago. Next, it's the deans who are upset over who is going to be on the planning committee. Dunn harrumphs again, explaining it's just a committee to discuss how to plan, as opposed to actually planning.

The dean of the school of social work arrives to chat about her publications and staff. Dunn's assistant pops in to find out if Dunn will give a commencement address at a local community college. Dunn agrees and tells her assistant to schedule a day to write the speech. Dunn meets with the dean of the college for more discussions about how to handle compliance with federal regulations for handicapped students.

Wet mops and high dust

It's 5:00 p.m. now, and things really get interesting. The task force on housekeeping arrives. They've done exhaustive studies on the time it takes to clean the dorms and concluded that some cleaning positions could be cut. It is a lengthy presentation. Mary Dunn listens quietly, with a somewhat glazed expression. After all, how much does Dunn really need to know about the techniques of wet mopping and high dusting? But she is patient, knowing she must not look as though she is unilaterally cutting long-time college employees.

The last meeting of the day is also the only one in which she sees a group of students. When she first arrived at Smith, she taught a weekly colloquium in history for freshmen. But her schedule didn't allow her to invest the necessary time. So Dunn has sought other ways to hear from students. She points with some pride to her student interns, who arrange dinners with other students to discuss issues—a politely controlled way to see students.

Tonight's gathering is to discuss the "learning curve" at Smith. But most of the talk is about grades, workloads, and whether women really feel free to speak up in class. Dunn sits in one corner and looks as though she's heard it all before, and she probably has. And she'll probably hear it all again. For during this day Dunn has covered many issues and resolved few.

Earlier in my day with Dunn, her schedule included a meeting with the head of the student government. Dunn meets with her frequently and had attended a student council dinner the night before. The student hesitated. There was something she wanted to tell Dunn but seemed not to want to start. Then with a youthful rush, she let it flow. The student cabinet really appreciated her coming to the dinner the night before, but she didn't stay long enough. People wanted to bend her ear. Dunn explained she had had to leave to go to another dinner. Well, yes, the student president understood that, but. . . .

It was a sad but instructive moment. A student full of good intentions wanted the president to become more of what presidents used to be. A president full of good intentions felt she had bent over backwards to accommodate students, especially given the demands of the capital campaign and everything else. There was simply no center where the two could meet. When the student had finished, Dunn let her remarks pass in silence, and then she started in on the next subject. □

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Correction
Northeastern Correctional Center
Post Office Box 1069
West Concord, Massachusetts 01742

Paul Rakiey
SUPERINTENDENT

Michael S. Dukakis
GOVERNOR

Michael V. Fair
COMMISSIONER

January 10, 1989

TO: ALL INMATES

FROM: Martin Doto, Sergeant/Work Officer

RE: Toilet Paper

Effective immediately, toilet paper will be distributed on a weekly basis. Each inmate will be allowed one roll per week, and he will be responsible to monitor his own use.

Will be distributed on Wednesdays.

MD:mlo

cc: File

Accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections

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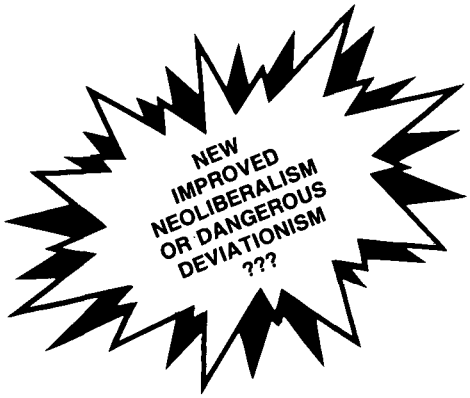

THE GOSPEL RECONSIDERED

Over the years, this magazine has become identified with a core of ideas—from drafting the affluent into the military to taking away their Social Security to making them pay higher income tax—jokingly referred to in-house as the "Gospel." Longtime Monthly *readers would be surprised to see an issue go by without mention of at least some of the Gospel. They would be equally surprised to find those ideas under attack. Some magazines consider themselves roundtables for discussion; not the* Monthly. *"Why should I publish something I don't agree with?" has been the philosophy of Charles Peters, the editor in chief, since he founded the magazine 20 years ago.*

Not surprisingly, this philosophy has been a source of occasional frustration among the editors who have worked here, who inevitably find themselves disagreeing with parts of the party line. This issue lets them have their say. As part of our effort to mark our 20th anniversary year, we've asked our contributing editors to tell us where they disagree with the Gospel. Eleven of them weighed in. Charles Peters responds on page 52.

The Rich Don't Serve

by Michael Kinsley

One chapter of the Gospel According to *The Washington Monthly* that I have some trouble with is Charlie Peters's enthusiasm for a military draft. This bad idea in its own right also reflects two characteristic defects of the Peters Gospel generally. First, a slight authoritarian streak: a too-casual willingness to say that something ought to be required just because it would be nice (such as Charlie's notorious proposal for a law banning banks from the ground floors of office buildings). Second, an occasional failure to think through the practical difficulties of achieving some desirable end through a seemingly simple policy initiative (such as the idea of giving a capital gains break to "new" and "productive" investments only).

It certainly would be nice if the armed services represented a cross section of the population; if every citizen made a patriotic contribution to America before going off on his or her own life course; if there were one guaranteed occasion of social class mixing in our increasingly stratified society. These are the advantages Charlie sees in a draft, based on his own experience in World War II. (These, plus saving the government money.) But telling people they must give up two years of their lives is a major infringement on freedom, for which there ought to be a major reason. "The defense of our country" is, of course, a major reason, but the defense of our country is not at stake. It is being defended adequately without a draft, by people who are in the military because they wish to be there. The people who make defense policy are not merely satisfied with current arrangements—they actively prefer a volunteer force to a draft, for obvious reasons. Are the genuine but amorphous spiritual reasons for bringing back a draft more important?

Nicholas Von Hoffman put the practical case against a draft in a nutshell many years ago when he wrote: "Draft old men's money, not young men's

Michael Kinsley, the editor of The New Republic, *is on sabbatical in London where he is working for* The Economist. *He was an editor at the* Monthly *in 1975 and 1976.*

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— So What?

bodies." One way to look at a draft is as a tax on the difference between what the Army pays you and what it would take to entice you into the Army voluntarily. At some level of pay and benefits, the military can meet its manpower needs without resorting to this tax. Von Hoffman's point was: why not pay for the national defense by taxing the people who can best afford it?

Look at this economic point another way. Today, we actually *are* paying enough to fill the Army without a draft (though, of course, we are borrowing the money instead of taxing ourselves to raise it—a different problem). No more soldiers are needed. A draft, therefore, would be pointless unless it accompanied a reduction in pay and benefits to get rid of some of those volunteers and make room for the draftees. That might well make the Army more socially representative. But what would happen to those who join up voluntarily under current policies? One of two things. Either they would be in the Army anyway (as volunteers or draftees), only earning a lot less; or they would be doing something else (or possibly nothing else) when they'd rather be in the Army under current arrangements. In short, however "unfair" it may seem to fill the Army with volunteers, it's no favor to would-be volunteers to shut off this option in order to put others unwillingly in their place.

In fact, today's volunteer military is reasonably socially diverse. There aren't a lot of Groton graduates, and the poorest of the underclass aren't wanted or needed. But between these two extremes, it's fairly representative of society as a whole. And to the extent it isn't, so what? Why should the military be a perfect social cross section? In particular, if black Americans find in the armed services an especially good opportunity for self-advancement with less discrimination, and as a result are disproportionately represented there, I think that's something America can be reasonably proud of rather than the reverse. In a way, it's insulting to those who have chosen military service, either as a career or as a useful life experience that will lead somewhere else, to say that what they're doing is so undesirable that others who aren't interested should be forced to do it in their place.

Even if military service is made so undesirable that there are *no* volunteers, there will still be the practical problem of what to do with all the draftees. The military needs only a small fraction of any age cohort. What about the rest? The Vietnam-era solution was a wildly generous and unfair system of exemptions. Since this episode was precisely the origin of the *Monthly*'s draft enthusiasm, that option's presumably out. There are only two others: a lottery and a system of universal service that would include worthy nonmilitary work such as the Peace Corps and teaching in the inner city and so on.

A lottery would still be unfair, of course. It would just be unfair at random, rather than on perceived race and class grounds. If the volunteer army (as opposed to the old draft-with-exemptions) were truly unfair, that would be an improvement. But to snatch two years from just a small fraction of the population against their will, and to make room for them by reducing opportunity for people who want it, all in the name of "fairness," seems insane. As for drafting everybody and then finding work for them to do, that surely would wipe out any conceivable savings from underpaying soldiers. You don't have to be a neoconservative to predict that it would be a bureaucratic nightmare. And you don't need to be overly pessimistic about human nature to doubt that involuntary timeservers are going to put their hearts into their assigned tasks.

Having made the case, now let me backtrack. First, I'm talking about a peacetime draft. Obviously soldiers are needed only in peacetime because of the risk of war, and as a deterrent to war. But there's a difference between that risk and the much larger and more immediate risk to life and limb that comes from actually being in a war. If we ever find ourselves in an extended land war again—hard to imagine—that's the time for a draft. Whether having a draft already in place would make starting and pursuing such a war harder—as the Gospel assumes—or easier is, at the very least, unclear.

Second, a new spirit of patriotic service of the sort Charlie longs for, in contrast to the reigning spirit of the Reagan years, is an attractive vision. You can imagine a culture where it was more or less assumed that everybody would do a year or two of military or civilian service after high school or college, before heading off into "the real world." It wouldn't even offend my libertarian principles too much if kids were given a slight nudge through provisos in student loans and so on. But it seems to me that encouraging voluntary service is a more promising way to create such a new spirit than telling young people: "OK, buddy, it's either work with Alzheimer's victims, go to jail, or move to Canada." □

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Gee, I Kind of Like Fiction

What Halberstam could learn from Dostoevski

by Joseph Nocera

A few years after *The Washington Monthly* was founded, Tom Wolfe, who was then promoting what he called The New Journalism, wrote the following: "So the novelist has been kind enough to leave behind for our boys quite a nice little body of material: the whole of American society, in effect." The New Journalism is quite passe, of course, even for Tom Wolfe, but I think that little sentence of his sums up rather nicely this magazine's stance towards both journalism and fiction. On the one hand, it has consistently banged the drums for a particular kind of extremely ambitious journalism—a journalism that tackled the major problems of American society with a combination of empathy and intensive reporting and hard, original thinking and literary grace. On the other hand, it has just as consistently dismissed virtually all fiction since Mark Twain, describing it generally (as Wolfe did) as out of touch, irrelevant to the modern world. Matthew Cooper's article last December decrying the lack of "a new Dickens" is only the most recent example.

Who can doubt that the magazine was right to champion its brand of journalism? In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the only "name" writers doing that kind of work were Robert Caro and David Halberstam. Now one sees it everywhere; last year alone gave us two stunning examples of how far the genre has come: Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie*, and Taylor Branch's *Parting The Waters*. (See Annual Book Award, page 23.) Both are rich, empathetic studies of important American events—the former dealing with Vietnam, the latter with the civil rights movement—and both have a scope and an ambition that are staggering. To the extent that fiction has dropped the ball in examining large societal problems—and I won't deny that it has—journalism has taken up the challenge, and we are all better off.

Nevertheless, I think the magazine has been wrong to be so dismissive of the virtues of the modern novel. Yes, the scourge of minimalism abounds, and yes, there are too many novels revolving around life inside a university English department. Then again, there is also a lot of bad journalism. My point is simply that there are things a good novel can do—places it can go; thoughts it can think; depths it can plumb—that even the best nonfiction can never hope to approximate.

The case for the modern novel, it seems to me, is quite the opposite of *The Washington Monthly*'s yearning for a fictional approach to social problems that will prick the conscience of the nation. A novel's purpose in the modern age—and I think it is a noble one—is to explore the inner life with a richness and a subtlety that nonfiction can never match. A writer who is dependent (as all journalists are) on the act of interviewing to collect his information can never get completely to the bone; there will always be a few layers left unpeeled. Thus it is left to the novelist to lay bare the interior life. This is no small thing, for it is there that one gets to the crux of why people act and think the way they do. It is in those

Joseph Nocera, an editor of The Washington Monthly *in 1978 and 1979, is a contributing editor of* Newsweek *and is at work on a modern history of personal finance.*

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deepest recesses of the soul that one gets at attitudes, at moral dilemmas, at *motivation*—out of which comes understanding, empathy, and all the rest of it.

Oddly enough, Tom Wolfe himself provides an interesting case study of this thesis. Wolfe, who had spent a wonderful journalistic career plucking from scenes the most delicious details that said everything about class and status, became a novelist with the publication of his hugely successful *Bonfire of the Vanities*. At least part of what prompted Wolfe to write the book was to show the world that a novel on the Dickens model could be written about America today. *Bonfire* has the sweep of a Dickens novel, all right, and it is full of those telling status details—the cut of a man's suit; the make of his car; the fact of his pinkie ring; and so on. Yet despite its enormous commercial success, the novel simply falls flat as a work of fiction. It's all sheen, all surface—to be blunt, all journalism gussied up as a novel—and what it lacks most of all is precisely that sense of having peeled back the layers and exposed the souls of his characters. They are better than cardboard, but not much better.

More recently, another ex-journalist, Ward Just, had his most recent "Washington" novel published, entitled *Jack Gance*. It is as small and quiet as *Bonfire* is loud and flamboyant—and it succeeds where *Bonfire* fails. Although there are moments of drama in *Jack Gance*, it does not tell a particularly dramatic story; what pulls you along instead is the explication of relationships—between father and son, most tellingly—that speak truths to us all. It cuts to the bone. Just also dots his book with sentences that seem unerringly right in describing the mores of modern Washington. (One example, among many: describing a big-shot columnist, he writes, "His investigations often turned on the misuse of money, but since he had become rich himself, he discovered that money was more subtle than it had seemed when he was poor.") In a sense, Just, like the best modern novelists—Anne Tyler, Phillip Roth, Raymond Carver, and a substantial handful of others—is descended not from Dickens but from Dostoevski. How can that not be worth applauding? □

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY
Journalism Award

for December 1988 is presented to

Ralph Blumenthal
Sam Howe Verhovek
The New York Times

The decentralization of New York City school boards was supposed to strengthen parental control of the schools. But the *Times* explains how members of a Bronx school board have subverted that goal by turning the schools into objects of plunder, profit, and patronage for unqualified relatives and political supporters. Their students ranked lowest in test scores of the city's 32 districts.

Peter Luke
Mark Hornbeck
The Ann Arbor News

This series on the state lottery documents in persuasive detail an old charge and a new one. Luke and Hornbeck use census and betting data to prove the familiar charge that lotteries rely on bets from the poor. But they add a new wrinkle to the story by showing that the profits from inner-city betting get channeled disproportionately toward subsidizing schools in wealthier parts of the state.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation.

The award for stories published or aired in January will be announced in the April issue. Nominations for stories published or aired in February will close March 15. The winner will be announced in the May issue. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

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Act II, Winning an Election

by Nicholas Lemann

The day that I had my job interview at *The Washington Monthly* a new issue had just come into the office. In huge type, the cover said, CRIMINALS BELONG IN JAIL. It's a sign of how much the liberal world has changed that at the time, February 1976, this seemed shocking to me—it was the kind of thing that you just couldn't say, even if it was true. In order to restore vitality and intellectual honesty to liberalism, much of the psychic energy of the magazine in those days was devoted to raising all the points that liberals felt shouldn't be discussed because it would give the conservatives ammunition. But the assumption was always that liberalism would remain the reigning creed in America. We were not trying to move the Democratic Party to the right. We were not ourselves moving to the right. We were trying to make liberalism even better and stronger than it already was.

Even more than the urge to avoid issues like crime and defense, the aspect of conventional liberalism that the magazine most disliked was its elitism—its snobbery and its mistrust of politics, which seemed rooted in a belief that most people simply weren't very bright. So it's ironic, and sad, that *The Washington Monthly*'s greatest success over the 20 years of its existence has been in influencing the liberal elite—not about elitism, but about issues. On most public policy questions, the Eastern Establishment, such as it is these days, has come around to the positions this magazine has been advocating since its founding. You can bet the rent that the next Democratic presidential candidate will point out that criminals belong in jail.

The problem that nags the most right now is that the acceptance of *The Washington Monthly*'s positions is limited to a fairly small group. Neoliberalism, in essence if not by its unfortunate name, would win in a referendum taken among journalists and policy analysts. But it's still death on election day because of what comes after the "neo." The 1988 presidential election was especially depressing in this regard, because George Bush, unlike Ronald Reagan, is not a great political candidate, and seemed to draw his electoral strength mainly from tapping a reservoir of public distrust of liberalism. The unpopularity of liberalism is obviously rooted more in "populism" than in substantive disagreement; conservatives have been able to sell most people on the idea that liberals are powerful and contemptuous, the way bankers used to be in Thomas Nast cartoons. Liberal elitism and conservative presidential landslides are intimately connected. *The Washington Monthly* doesn't really need an infusion of new ideas right now; its 20-year-old ideas are still the right ones. The next great task for the magazine is figuring out how to bring about the political triumph of neoliberalism—and doing this will require completing the great piece of unfinished business in the establishment, which is overcoming its suspicion of democracy.

There are three prevailing theories about how to revive the Democratic Party in presidential politics. One, which might be called the Sam Nunn theory, holds that the Democrats should become more conservative, especially on defense and foreign policy, and thus win back the South. Another, the Barney Frank theory, is that if the Democrats could rid themselves of a few exotic positions (such as the idea that criminals don't belong in jail) they would get the middle class back. Finally, according to the Bob Kuttner theory, if the Democrats ditch the social issues and fully embrace class- and constituency-based economic politics, they could build a working-class majority. All these theories have crucial flaws. The Nunn theory assumes that the South is winnable for the Democrats, which last fall's election results call into question. The Frank theory takes away the Democrats' negatives without adding positives. The Kuttner theory seems to work only in hard times.

Neoliberals are frequently accused of lacking a political base—except for journalists, it's often added with a snicker. Actually, there is an encouraging historical parallel for the position of neoliberals today, which is the Progressives. They too proceeded from an interest in government to a mastery of politics; Progressivism first flowered among journalists and reformers, and elected local and state officials before it was a force in national politics. In retrospect the key to the Progressives' political success was not their clever stitching together of con-

Nicholas Lemann, an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1976 to 1978, is national correspondent for* The Atlantic.

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WHO'S WHO

You're not going to believe it! Among those **George Bush** has named to his commission on ethics in government is none other than our old friend from Watergate days, **Fred "White Gloves" Fielding**. The president doubtless feels that Fielding's experience will be essential when the commission considers the more sensitive moral issues involved in safecracking....

Another old friend of Who's Who, **Robert Kimmitt**, the man who didn't ask **Dan Quayle** the right questions, has been rewarded with one of the choicer plums in the State Department hierarchy as undersecretary for political affairs. Insiders say his real role will be to monitor the activities of the National Security Council for **James Baker**....

Speaking of the NSC, the senior staffers named so far—**Robert D. Blackwill, David C. Miller Jr., William Working, Richard Haass**, and **Karl D. Jackson**—confirm the signal given by the president's selection of **Brent Scowcroft** and **Robert Gates** that the council is unlikely to play a dynamic or bold role but that it will be competent, professional, and without a trace of the corruption or sleaze that marred its reputation during **Ronald Reagan**'s incumbency....

James Pinkerton, whom our readers will recall is the man who first realized that **Willie Horton** could win the election for George Bush, has been rewarded with a job on the White House staff....

If you have a problem with the Treasury Department, you might give **Joe Califano** a call. Why would a Democrat like Califano, who played such a prominent role in the Johnson and Carter administrations, have any influence with a Republican Treasury Department? Because one of his proteges, **John H. Robson** will be deputy secretary....

Further evidence that **Craig Fuller** has not lost his influence with the Bush administration comes from the invitation he has received to join the lobbying firm headed by **Anne Wexler** and **Nancy Reynolds**. They are regarded as far too savvy to take on a partner whose calls won't be answered....

It may be that **Dan Quayle**'s lack of enthusiasm for his press spokesman, **David Beckwith**, will be even greater when he learns that while working for *Time* last year, Beckwith helped compile the file for *Time*'s harshest article about Quayle....

In—*White House:* Director of Administration—**Paul W. Bateman.** Cabinet Secretary—**David Q. Bates Jr.** Assistant to the President for Issue Analysis—**Richard C. Breeden.** Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs—**Frederick D. McClure.** Special Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs, House—**Gary Andres.** Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff—**Edward M. Rogers Jr.** Assistant to the President for Communications—**David F. Demarest.** Assistant to the President for Special Activities and Initiatives—**Stephen M. Studdert.** Director of Presidential Advance—**John G. Keller Jr.** Executive Secretary, Economic Policy Council—**Lehmann K. Li.** Executive Secretary, Economic Policy Council—**Kenneth P. Yale.** Associate Counsel to the President—**Lee S. Liberman.** Director, White House Military Office—**Col. Antonio Lopez.** Director, Office of Political Affairs—**James R. Wray.** Deputy to the Chief of Staff—**Andrew H. Card Jr.** Assistant to the President for Economic and Domestic Policy—**Roger B. Porter.** Deputy Assistant to the President for Policy Planning—**James P. Pinkerton.** Director of Congressional Affairs—**Gordon B. Wheeler.** Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget—**William Diefenderfer III**. *Commerce:* Undersecretary for Trade Administration—**J. Michael Farren.** Undersecretary for Export Administration—**Dennis Kloske.** Undersecretary for Economic Affairs—**Michael R. Darby.** Assistant Secretary for Trade Development—**Michael Sharzynski.** Assistant Secretary for Economic Policy—**Thomas Duesterberg.** Assistant Secretary for Import Administration—**Eric Garfinkel.** *Defense:* Deputy Secretary—**Donald Atwood**. Undersecretary for Policy—**Paul D. Wolfowitz.** *Energy:* Secretary—**James D. Watkins.** *Interior:* Secretary—**Manuel Lujan Jr.** *Labor:* Secretary—**Elizabeth Dole.** *State:* Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs—**Richard L. Armitage.** Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs—**John H. Kelly.** Undersecretary for Security Assistance, Science and Technology—**Reginald Bartholomew.** Undersecretary of Management—**Ivan Selin.** Undersecretary for Political Affairs—**Robert Kimmitt.** Ambassador to Japan—**Michael H. Armacost.** *Transportation:* Secretary— **Samuel K. Skinner.** *Treasury:* Assistant Secretary for International Affairs—**Charles H. Dallara.** Assistant Secretary for Policy Development—**Hollis S. McLoughlin.** General Counsel—**Edith E. Holiday.** *Veterans Administration:* Secretary—**Edward J. Derwinski.** *Agencies and Commissions:* Director, Peace Corps—**Paul D. Coverdell.** Administrator, Agency for International Development—**M. Alan Woods.** Administrator, Small Business Administration—**Susan S. Engeleiter.** Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency—**William K. Reilly.** Director, United States Information Agency—**Bruce Gelb.** Director, Office of Personnel Management—**Constance Berry Newman.**

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stituency groups, but their ability to convince the country that it had social and economic problems, ranging from child labor to rotten meat to the despoiling of nature, that had to be solved by government.

Neoliberalism should now focus on making two main points to voters, one specific and one general. The specific point is that the government is not delivering on its basic obligations. It doesn't provide every child with a decent free education. It doesn't adequately protect the environment. It doesn't keep cities free of crime. It doesn't maintain the roads and keep the military in a state of readiness. The chink in the conservatives' armor is their idea that all problems can be solved simply by paring away layers of government. Nobody believes this any more. If the Democrats can convincingly present themselves as the efficient provider of government services that the country badly needs, they'll instantly have made the case for themselves, and the constituencies will follow.

The larger point is that the government can be a unifying force in a nation that badly needs to be unified. A generation ago, it was widely predicted that the national life was in danger of becoming too uniform, too conformist, too homogeneous. Instead, what has happened is a splintering of the country by age, class, race, and economic activity, with each group looking out for its narrow interests and major national efforts nearly impossible to bring off. Neoliberals should make it clear that all of the specific tasks of government are undertaken in the cause of patriotism; thus every success of the government will have the effect of increasing Americans' faith in their country and each other.

What is a magazine's place in this largely political mission? It can report on how neoliberalism is doing in the political world, providing an ongoing local politics field test of the agenda. It can hammer away at the reserves of snobbery that keep its readers from devoting their time and attention to the political fortunes of neoliberalism. It can provide a stream of examples that show what makes government work well, or not work well, which will provide neoliberals with the information they need to establish themselves as reliable operators of governments. It can try constantly, by providing examples from real life, to give humanity and urgency to the national problems that government should solve—to take them out of the statistical table and the seminar room. All this requires the magazine to work constantly at marrying its body of theory to examples from around the country. If we can do this effectively for the next 20 years, we should be able to say that we've changed a lot more than people's minds. □

What Charlie Learn From

by Gregg Easterbrook

Intellectual magazines like this are never exactly what you might call gold mines. Opinions, like farm products, are being overproduced—that's why the markets for both are depressed. But just because *The Washington Monthly* does not itself make money is no reason for the magazine to have such confabulated opinions about enterprises that do. Advocacy of the peacetime draft already having been taken (see Michael Kinsley, page 26), I choose economic doubletalk as my objection to the magazine's first 20 years.

► In the 1960s and 1970s the *Monthly* was unique among liberal intellectual publications in extolling the need for business growth and calling business an honorable profession. That's much to its credit. But for all the homage to the businessman the *Monthly* has published, the magazine blows a gasket whenever any corporation (except perhaps locally owned passenger train ventures in West Virginia) or individual (except perhaps the first-generation immigrant inventors of low-cost military hardware) actually clears a profit.

Isn't profit the organizing discipline of a market economy? Surely profit should not be the only goal. But it has to be one of the chief goals if all the many other benefits of market economics—prosperity, jobs, material security, a mechanism for the lower class to move up—are to be realized. Ivan Boesky was wrong to say that the word "greed" is good. But there surely is nothing wrong with the phrase "*maximize* profit." Occasionally companies make big profits via fraud, monopoly, or other chicanery. Usually they make big profits because they deserve to—the market is pretty effective in distributing that reward. So *Monthly*, quit groaning about profit.

► What's so terrible about the service/yuppie/paper economy? The *Monthly* often laments that the backbreaking, dangerous, soul-draining jobs in heavy industrial production are being replaced by highly paid white-collar desk jobs. . .??????? Sounds pretty good to me. Yes, it's true that those new white-collar jobs requiring higher education tend to shut out the traditional working class. But look how much the traditional working class has *shrunk* in the postwar years—because so many of its members or their children have moved up to the new, far larger

Gregg Easterbrook, an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1980 to 1982, is a contributing editor of* Newsweek.

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Peters Can Henry Kravis

NEW IMPROVED NEOLIBERALISM ???

white-collar class. I often stand on my head trying to figure out why this in itself is bad for America.

► What's so terrible about mergers and paper-shuffling of assets? Sure, mergers and paper-shuffling are bad when carried to excess or used to create monopoly power. But usually mergers take place because the resulting enterprises are more efficient than what they replace. Otherwise the market, which appears in most cases (not all) to reward mergers, would have to be seen as highly illogical. And whatever else the market may be, it's not illogical.

Also, contrary to the impression you get reading the *Monthly*, all under-40 Ivy League graduates in America are not currently engaged in arranging corporate mergers. The number of firms that specialize in mergers and acquisitions is surprisingly small—that's why the same few dominate the headlines on this subject.

► The *Monthly* often asserts that private ownership of corporations is superior to public ownership because private owners, freed from pressure to post quarterly gains, are in a better position to play a public-spirited role in the community. There is some truth to this contention. But as we are finding out in the age of the leveraged buy-out, it overlooks the downside of private ownership: secretiveness, unaccountability, running corporations solely for the good of the managers. We now take for granted that corporations must disclose to the public vast amounts of data about their operations; such disclosure stems from the legal implications of offering public shares. If the typical large American corporation were privately held, the public ability to monitor and understand corporate behavior would be severely restricted.

Meanwhile, though extolling the beauty of private ownership, when the *Monthly* notes public corporations such as the Washington Post Co. (disclosure: my employer) buying back shares of its stock, it cries conspiracy.

At any rate why must we assume that public corporations can have responsibilities *only* to their shareholders? There is no reason why a public corporation's charter could not be written or amended to rank community responsibility and shareholder fiduciary responsibility of equal value. True, the market would then discount the value of such a corporation's stock. But some might actively choose to invest in such a corporation in preference to others. And it might have an easier time obtaining the regulatory approval needed to make money in some fields. And so on.

► Who cares about absentee ownership? The *Monthly* often reflects in economic matters the sort of fear of "outsiders" that is among the less attractive aspects of traditional small-town life. Some locally owned businesses are ogres; some businesses run from faraway skyscrapers are socially responsible.

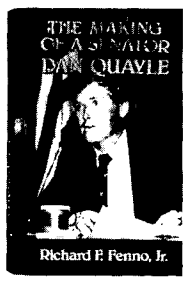
I'm from Buffalo and a long-suffering Buffalo Bills fan. For years all true Buffalonians intensely despised the Bills's absentee owner, Ralph Wilson, a Detroit businessman. It was said that the Bills were bad because Wilson, living in a different city, didn't care about Buffalo civic pride and wouldn't invest in the team. Then a few years ago Wilson underwent some kind of epiphany and began to invest in the Bills. Now the Bills are championship contenders and Wilson is a local hero. What does this tale suggest about absentee ownership? That it's a neutral factor. What matters is the character of management, not the town that managers sit in.

And P.S. to owners and managers—this tale also suggests it's a heck of a lot more fun, and not really all that hard, to be a local hero than to be intensely despised. □

"I was very bored in the House. It's an awful job — especially being a Republican there. You can't get anything done." – from

The Making of a Senator: Dan Quayle

Richard F. Fenno, Jr.



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What Charlie Peters Can Learn From Jerry Brown

by Arthur Levine

The small-is-beautiful economy

Last year, America woke up with a hangover. Our profligate ways were coming back to haunt us on several fronts—including the environment, ethics, and the economy—and we didn't like it one bit. Cries for a less materialistic way of life, having long been voiced by *The Washington Monthly* and other Cassandras, were suddenly being echoed by larger publications: *Newsweek*, for instance, told us that "The 80s Are Over" and that "Greed Goes Out of Style." *Time* warned about our "Endangered Earth." The new sensitivity was indeed heartening, but it didn't cut to the heart of the issue: the nation's traditional approach to economic growth can't work anymore—we produce and consume too much that is harmful and unnecessary, and we ought to be considering alternatives to the "more is better" philosophy that undergirds our economy and our lives. We could make the needed changes without dooming ourselves to a bleak, primitive life of bean sprouts and self-denial.

It's not a new message, but it's one we finally ought to start listening to. Since the mid-1960s, a group of mavericks has been warning us about *The Limits to Growth* and urging us to realize that *Small is Beautiful*. For the most part, they've been dismissed as cranks and doomsayers. The most sensible of them aren't opposed to a vibrant economy, but they want to make sure that any growth we do experience is ecologically sound and humane.

The *Monthly* has, at times, talked eloquently about the perils of materialism. Unfortunately, the magazine's admirable values are not likely to be achieved within the vision of economic growth shared, in one form or another, by neoliberals and virtually every other influential voice.

If we're to be less materialistic, to give but one example, it means that we'll buy fewer products and there will be less revenue for business. The hard question that neoliberals and others haven't asked is: Can we have more time for families and volunteerism, less materialism, and still have high economic growth? I don't think so.

It's therefore worth understanding some of the wrong-headed assumptions that prompt us to support the growth economy—no matter what the consequences in our lives. First, economists tend to measure economic health by one indicator, the Gross National Product. But it's simply too vague to be of much use. If I get in a car accident and wreck several other cars, destroy street-lamps, prompt policemen to work overtime, and spend thousands recuperating, it's all considered a net *plus* for the GNP. Second, the growth advocates believe the economy can grow unimpeded by limits on the environment or resources. But even a moderate 3 percent growth rate (annual rate last year, not counting inflation: 2.8 percent) means doubling production and consumption every 25 years—a prospect that seems particularly grim given the garbage barges,

Arthur Levine, an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1974 to 1975, is an associate editor of* U.S. News & World Report.

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swollen landfills, and poisoned water, air, and land we already face. And third, the "anything goes" approach to growth may worsen the problems—particularly unemployment—it aims to solve. That's because expanding industries are usually accompanied by automation, while the new jobs require more skills or, in the case of the proverbial hamburger-flipper, exist far from the inner cities.

For many Americans, these problems haven't directly affected their lives—yet. But people in the Third World have felt the disastrous effects of large-scale projects to promote economic growth. They have seen soil and croplands eroded, forests disappear, and children starve and die, in large part because of wasteful development projects that have also saddled these countries with $1.3 trillion in debt and the resulting drastic cuts in social services.

The growth advocates, naturally, muster a range of arguments. High growth, they say, is necessary to help the poor because, as John Kennedy put it, "A rising tide lifts all boats." Pollution problems can be solved with improved technology and the shift toward a service economy, they say. And, most tellingly, they argue that limits on growth would cost jobs.

But the best rebuttal to the high-growth-solves-poverty argument is. . .the Reagan administration. One growth proponent put it bluntly: "Growth is a substitute for equality of income. So long as there is growth there is hope, and that makes large income differentials tolerable." Without a genuine commitment to help the poor, you won't see progress in any new War on Poverty. Second, new technologies aren't an unalloyed blessing: remember when nuclear power was considered a safe, magical substitute for coal and oil? As for jobs, let's face facts: making reforms could, in some cases, threaten jobs. The central question really is whether to allow "job blackmail" or to look instead for new ways to provide work and income. Currently, our entire economy is like one of those pathetic small towns desperate to keep, say, a chemical plant operating regardless of the hazards.

Broader than bananas

Those looking for new ways of doing business propose instead a New Economics, "based on personal development and social justice, the satisfaction of the whole range of human needs, sustainable use of resources [e.g. solar power] and conservation of the environment," as economist Paul Ekins puts it. Yes, it sounds hopelessly idealistic, but given what we have now, it's certainly worth a try.

There are intriguing ways to encourage such new work opportunities. One is job sharing. It has been especially welcomed by women who have kids to raise and yet want to remain active professionals. Job sharing would provide more employment without forcing us to depend on the hazards of untrammeled economic growth. Even if wages fell somewhat with a reduced work week, some people, at least, would welcome more free time. Industries (and unions) resistant to job sharing could try a second provocative approach. Anthony Mazzocchi of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers' International Union, has called for a "Superfund for Workers" that would acknowledge society's responsibility to displaced workers by paying them their former wages while subsidizing them to go to college.

I'd also be glad to see some sort of minimum guaranteed income. Besides helping the poor, this would free working people to spend less time at traditional jobs, provide more time for volunteer work, leisure, and entrepreneurship, and create the sort of economic leverage that would make today's unattractive jobs more appealing and better paid.

Where would all the new money for these guarantees come from? Some might come from higher taxes on corporate mergers ($25 billion), inheritances ($20 billion), gasoline ($45 billion), luxuries ($10 billion), other fossil fuel use and oil imports ($90 billion), plus beer and wine ($25 billion). This would be coupled with the government saving money by promoting new ways of living and doing business. Among the steps: paying people a small bonus for staying well and requiring insurance coverage for preventive care; ending $10-$15 billion in tax breaks for nuclear power or fossil fuels.

Besides calling for fresh approaches to jobs and income, the New Economic visionaries also support more democratic industries and self-reliant communities. Such initiatives spur productivity. One troubled Minnesota town created 45 new jobs by building a plant to recycle rubber from tires. In the Caribbean island of Dominica, small farmers, backed by groups such as Oxfam America have broadened their crops beyond bananas for exports. They've added to their incomes and reduced their food bills by 30 percent. These are small steps, surely, but they show that communities can increase their self-reliance and raise revenues so they're not dependent on the whims of big corporations. So far, we haven't had the political leadership to articulate the appeal of a New Economy, even though there are millions of people, from laid-off steelworkers to harried managers, who could be stirred by some of these ideas. The Solar Age still awaits its Franklin Delano Roosevelt, or even its Gorbachev, someone to realize that the U.S. economy, too, needs its own *perestroika*. □

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The Ozone's Shot, the Oceans Stink — So What Has the Monthly Had to Say?

by Phil Keisling

George Bush's "Ich bin ein environmentalist" speech at the Republican convention, and his infamous commercial blaming Michael Dukakis for the pollution in Boston harbor, left many Democrats livid. After all, Reagan-Bush gave us Anne Gorsuch and James Watt, and Bush helped cut funding for the very federal program Boston was relying on to speed its harbor cleanup. So where were Dukakis's hard-hitting commercials that laid out this sorry record for public ridicule?

It's especially puzzling when one considers Americans' overwhelming support for environmental issues. In poll after poll, Americans choose environmental protection over development, even when they're told the consequences would be reduced living standards and higher unemployment. Relatively new environmental horror scenarios—ozone depletion, the greenhouse effect, large-scale deforestation—have only strengthened such attitudes.

That's all the more reason to understand better Dukakis's failures—and our own. Indeed, examining *The Washington Monthly* from 1969-89, it would be difficult to discern the extent to which American attitudes towards the environment have undergone a sea-change in this period. Only the women's movement rivals the environmental movement for its impact on the values of an entire generation. Yet aside from articles on a few discreet environmental issues—strip mining, the energy crisis, toxic waste—the *Monthly* has done little to articulate what might be called an "environmental ethic," a broad philosophical foundation on which the Democrats could capitalize.

Such an environmental ethic would certainly appeal to the upscale, urban backpackers who frequent America's wilderness areas. But it would also include the vast numbers of suburban residents and blue-collar workers whose tastes run more to fishing and hunting. (Oregon is typical of most western states in that more residents have hunting and fishing licenses than vote.) These Americans certainly don't agree on everything; many of the latter voted for Reagan. But they do share some basic values—for example, a fierce desire not to see prime hunting, fishing, and scenic areas despoiled by oil derricks and condominiums.

Of course, it is easy to dismiss such notions as "love of the land," as gushy romanticism, and, in a sense, they are. But it's a romanticism that's quintessentially American, no less so than a longing for community, a desire to be an entrepreneur, or a fondness for passenger trains. And like these notions, such an environmental ethic looks backwards as well as forward. It contains powerful images of "what used to be"—undammed rivers, vast virgin forests, pristine air. (Remember how much of Reagan's success was due to a similar backwards glance to the era of small-town values, voluntarism, and small government.) But it also looks forward. At the center of an environmental ethic is the notion of today's generation trying to do right by the next generation, and beyond.

So why have Democrats been so shy about articulating such a vision? Recent history is certainly one reason. Reagan's appeal was based largely on a belief that we could have it both ways. In many Democratic circles, those who talk about "limits"—a Jerry Brown term much derided of late—are still treated like unwelcome relatives at family gatherings.

A second reason is that many Democrats don't think we *have* to trumpet environmental issues, that voters will assume that Democrats are more sensitive to protecting our land, water, and air. This fails to give some Republicans their due; Richard Nixon, remember, presided over Earth Day in 1970 and played an active role in much of the landmark environmental legislation of that era. The Democrats also tend to ignore some of their own history. Indeed, when other Democratic values have come into play—full employment, an activist federal government—the environment has often been the loser.

It's one thing to wax outraged over a Love Canal or toxic waste dumps, vilifying the negligence of big oil and chemical companies. But what if the issue is preserving large tracts of old-growth trees, some of them almost 1,000 years old, thereby threatening the jobs of local loggers and union millworkers? What if damming a wild river will help thousands of farmers to "make the desert bloom?"

These are much tougher issues, and Democrats have often tried to have it both ways. Mo Udall,

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widely admired for helping set aside vast stretches of Alaskan wilderness, has his fingerprints on some of Arizona's most senseless water diversion schemes. FDR's public works programs were marvels of engineering and employment. Yet his legacy also includes some heart-rending tales of environmental destruction. The Grand Coulee Dam, celebrated in song by Woody Guthrie (under contract to the federal government's Bonneville Power Administration), single-handedly destroyed most of the wild salmon runs of the Pacific Northwest. The Democrats have long been overly fond of large public works projects that benefit lots of people, many of them small farmers or members of building trade unions. Like a private developer run amok, it has too often been a Democratically controlled Congress that has leveled forests, dammed rivers, and flooded canyons in the name of progress. Indeed, southern Democrats are still notorious for championing such projects—which should give Democrats some pause as they scour the landscape for a post-Dukakis standard-bearer.

At the national level, the Democrats haven't yet found the voice that will allow them persuasively to champion environmental values, and the *Monthly* hasn't been much help. (At the state level, Democratic governors like Cecil Andrus of Idaho and Bruce Babbitt of Arizona have combined environmental advocacy with political success in the heart of "Reagan country.") To be sure, this won't be easy. The Democrats run the danger of again appearing to be the party of doom and gloom, expressing environmental fears more vividly than they express opportunities. (On economic issues, they've recently had just this problem.) The challenge is to link an environmental ethic with other values—community, generational fairness, even entrepreneurship.

That's where the *Monthly* can be of particular use. The magazine has been bold and persuasive in advocating these values. Linking them to an environmental ethic may be the *Monthly*'s next frontier. A few possibilities:

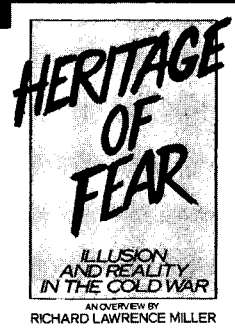
► **Community:** The *Monthly* has looked to public schools, the military, and national service as ways of bringing diverse classes together to the benefit of us all. National parks and other prime outdoors spots do the same. And if the *Monthly* is looking to promote forms of service, there's never been a better time to revive the Civilian Conservation Corps, one of FDR's best legacies. The *Monthly* recently ran an article attacking sidewalk cafes for taking liberties with curbside space that belongs to the public. There are forests, mountains, and lakes that need similar defense from those overzealous to exploit them for private or short-term gain.

► **Generational fairness:** The *Monthly* has derided the selfishness behind entitlement programs that tax young workers to subsidize the benefits of retired millionaires. What about the selfishness that would bequeath extinct rivers, forests, fish, and animals to the next generation?

► **Entrepreneurship:** The development of certain alternate energy technologies—solar energy, for example—promises to make communities much less reliant on distant, central generating stations that burn coal or nuclear fuel. If there are any "high-tech" entrepreneurs who deserve government encouragement, they are in these fields. And while it may seem risky for a local community to move away from a resource-consumption economy, the long-term benefits may be greater than the short-term costs. For an inspiring example, look to Butte, Montana, which a decade ago faced economic havoc when its open-pit copper mines were closed. Its economy has attracted national attention in the past few years for its strength and diversity.

The Democrats are struggling for a way to regain the White House, short of being turned to as "the other guy," when or if the economy collapses. What better vision to offer than one that embraces this country's natural beauty and the imperative of preserving it for future generations? Perhaps at some future Democratic convention the theme song shouldn't be Neil Diamond's "Coming to America" but an equally inspiring American piece—Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land." □

IS U.S. FOREIGN POLICY BASED ON FEAR?



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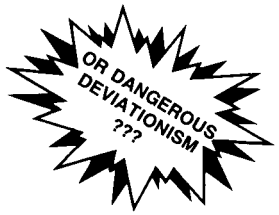

by Steven Waldman

A few years ago I came upon a small company that seemed to provide a strong rebuttal to the *Monthly*'s longtime support of merit pay. Instead of basing salaries on individual performance, it paid everyone the same—clerical workers, professionals, sales reps, accountants, even the artists. The exception was the owner and his assistant, but that seemed fair because they earned much less than other CEOs. I expected the system to engender internal bitterness since the work schedule was particularly brutal. When you're working Saturday nights you damn well want to get paid more than those who don't. But, on the contrary, this unusually egalitarian system forced employees to measure their performance by other standards—praise from the boss or customers, personal yardsticks of achievement, public recognition, and the general success of the enterprise. Pay was mostly irrelevant.

Granted, this company, *The Washington Monthly*, is not a typical workplace. In most reputable small companies, boss and worker don't communicate through a 2 a.m. "drop off" at the owner's home mailbox. Few companies flirt so regularly with bankruptcy. (Senator Jay Rockefeller, who was a *Monthly* investor in the late 1960s and early 1970s, said it all in his federal financial disclosure report, which cited stock in major corporations worth millions. It also listed 215 shares in The Washington Monthly Publishing Corp. with a sad notation explaining that the stock "to the best of our knowledge has no value.")

But when I left the *Monthly* in October 1987 and went to a more traditional company, I realized that the Monthly Management System had some advantages. Long a glazed-eyed believer in the sentimental notion that people should not measure their "worth" by how much they earn, I now, for the first time, find myself doing just that: Do I deserve a raise? Am I getting less than the guy down the hall who doesn't work as hard? That is, of course, what merit pay is supposed to do. By making me ask those questions it's supposed to motivate me to work harder. It didn't, but it did give me a whole new set of worries.

Obviously there are tremendous advantages to giving individuals a direct financial stake in performing well. But as I mentally multiplied my own neuroses by the entire work force I became convinced that the challenge is to devise pay systems that provide strong incentives but also confront the perils of meritocracy.

American mythology endorses pay for performance: Horatio Alger built success not through a good union contract but through hard work and smarts. No one who's ever bought a 50-volume encyclopedia or a 25-year supply of Avon lipstick can doubt the effectiveness of the commission system for sales reps. And managers increasingly hail pay-for-performance too. One recent survey found that 70 percent of U.S. firms now offer some sort of performance incentive. They include traditional "merit pay" (permanent salary increases based on a worker's individual performance), one-time bonuses, profit sharing, group incentives, or commissions. It seems like the perfect tonic for the American economy—both effective and true to our sense of fairness.

But this ignores an important fact about human beings. Merit pay rewards excellence—but not everyone is excellent. There are lots of average employees who perform adequately or worse. Most, however, do not believe they are merely average. Management surveys consistently reveal that about 80 percent of American workers believe they are better than the norm. There is, therefore, a natural demoralizing effect to many merit pay plans based on individual performance. Workers are regularly told they're just not good enough, an assessment that they all too often take home. Conversely, arbitrariness is an underappreciated force. True, it seems unfair when a good worker and bad worker earn the same amount. But both can blame "the system" and avoid judging themselves by their paychecks.

To reduce resentment, jealousy, and accusations of favoritism, some managers base evaluations on easily quantifiable factors. This works well for some jobs. Number of chairs produced X bonus = merit pay. Other jobs are more difficult. If ever a teacher deserved a merit raise, it was Michael D. Reynolds, a science teacher in Jacksonville, Florida. He always

Steven Waldman, an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1985 to 1987, is a correspondent in the Washington bureau of* Newsweek.

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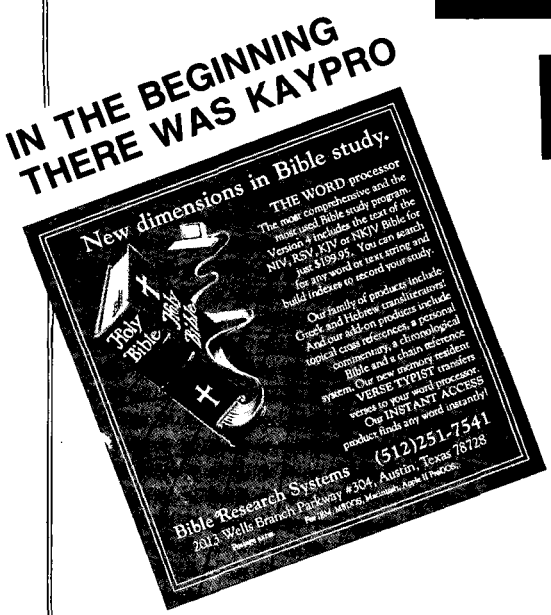

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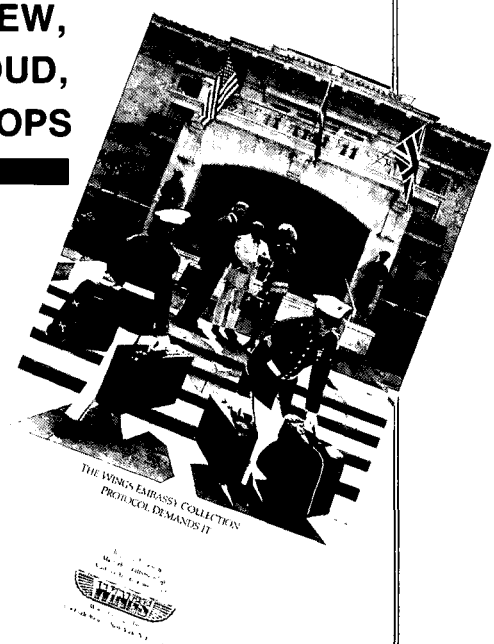
GOOD MOVE

New York City's police headquarters is suffering leaks, trapped elevators, and other maintenance problems. In 1973, it abandoned its old headquarters, a neo-baroque building, now a luxury condominium, where apartments cost up to $2.5 million.

THE FEW, THE PROUD, THE BELLHOPS



"I THINK IT'S WORSE BECAUSE IN MANY WAYS THAT POODLE, THAT DAMNED POODLE, WAS SYMBOLIC OF MY MOM."

A Postal Service memo in Columbus, Ohio read: "Five Columbus letter carriers were bitten by dogs in the month of July. . . . The Postal Service will seek to recover damages and to provide counseling to carriers who have been bitten. . . ."

GOLD DUST

Manville Corp. claims its fees for lawyers, investment bankers, and accounting firms for its six-year bankruptcy proceedings will cost $94 million.

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took the extra step to engage his students. He made special arrangements with a local observatory so his astronomy students could measure craters on the moon, for example. In 1985 a group of professional chemists voted him Chemistry Teacher of the Year. The next year his colleagues named him state Teacher of the Year. But he never got a raise under the merit pay program Florida started in 1985. Reynolds wasn't alone: the 1985 Teacher of the Year was refused a merit raise too.

Meanwhile, managers are increasingly discovering that motivating individual workers does not necessarily make a company more productive. Employees paid for individual production may be less likely to take time off to help a co-worker. Call it the Orgo Factor. Remember the organic chemistry major who put Clorox in his classmates' science experiments to improve his standing on the grading curve? He's now working under a merit pay plan near you.

The Orgo Factor

Merit pay advocates argue that it is particularly useful when you can't fire the worst workers. Not only can a lazy, malicious, or incompetent worker poison the whole enterprise but his continued financial reward can infuriate the better workers. While in theory, managers can use merit pay as a way of punishing people into leaving, in practice the strategy often makes matters worse. Punish a bad worker and you'll find out just how bad he is. If, for example, his base salary is healthy enough to sustain him and he's got pension rights building, this employee will dig in and become even less cooperative. Ultimately the only solution to the problem of not being able to fire terrible workers is to be able to fire terrible workers.

Given these difficulties it's not surprising that many managers don't like to judge their employees. Time and time again, managers take the merit pay pool and give a little to everyone. Look, for example, at the largest pay-for-performance system in the country—the federal government. About 2.1 million middle-level employees are eligible for "in-grade" step increases ostensibly based on merit. But annual and biannual step-ups are so routine—less than 1 percent of workers don't get them—that many workers don't even realize it's a merit system. The same forces operate in the private sector workforce. If a manager labels workers unsatisfactory he becomes responsible for making them satisfactory. Much easier just to say everyone's done a good job.

In some areas, like teaching and police work, society as a whole can't afford anything less than excellence. But that sentiment can't be applied realistically to the entire workforce. If it is to prosper, the American economy must not only encourage brilliant entrepreneurs but also get the most out of the bulk of the workforce that thinks it's above average but isn't. Teaching them how to do their jobs better will generally work better than paying their co-workers more money.

The most promising approach is to base bonuses, to whatever extent possible, on group performance. This obviously removes the Orgo Factor. It helps make cooperation not just a warm sentiment but a precondition to a bigger paycheck. Excellent performers are valued rather than resented since they help boost everyone's wages. Average workers aren't demoralized by the constant reminder that that's what they are, which is particularly important for those who are dedicated but not exceptionally talented. No system should penalize hard workers. Poor workers, meanwhile, receive sanctions much stronger than those given by timid managers—the dirty looks of co-workers.

Measuring group performance is also easier than judging individuals. Managers may not be able to tell whether an advertising team produced a good jingle because of the market researcher, the songwriter, or the lyricist. But they can tell if the jingle worked. Individual performance bonuses should be reserved for the truly stellar performers; that will help keep the real stars from leaving and is least likely to engender resentment.

Pay-for-performance systems have been heralded as a major solution for economic problems. But pure meritocracy doesn't work because it only deals well with the winners. Tomorrow's workplace must deal well with everyone. □

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The Screw-You Spirit

Tribalism and group antipathy

by James Fallows

Sometimes the *Monthly* includes "tribalism" on its list of evil practices, along with expense-account conventions, end-of-the-year government spending sprees, and so on. There's an important point here that is concealed by an unfortunate name.

"Tribalism" doesn't sound as if it has anything to do with the average American's life. The word sounds like something strictly from the Third World, appropriate only for people who actually describe themselves as belonging to "tribes," like the Ibos in Nigeria or the Miskitos in Nicaragua. But the meaning behind the term has a bearing not only on America's major problems but also on the country's best future hopes.

The idea behind "tribalism" is the instinctive sense that people are divided into "us" and "them" categories on the basis of traits they acquire by birth or upbringing—race, language, religion, clan, or caste membership. One crucial ingredient of the tribal mentality is that it's almost inconceivable for people to shift out of the category they're born into. The other crucial ingredient is a double standard of morality. People inside the tribe—"us"—deserve better treatment than the people on the outside—"them." When tribalism is described this way, it's easy to think of illustrations of its deplorable effects—in Northern Ireland, in the Middle East, in *The Godfather* and *Romeo and Juliet*. There are other, less obvious illustrations. The central tragedy of the Philippines, I think, is a "Godfather"-like family/tribal ethic that allows people to mistreat anyone who's not part of the same clan or "barangay."

The more important point, however, is that this kind of tribalism is the normal outlook in most of the world. It is not some peculiar, localized evil, like wife-burning in India, or just a form of ignorance that economic progress automatically corrects, like the drinking of impure water. From what I can tell after several years in Asia, most people strongly prefer to live with others of their own "tribe" and feel only a feeble bond to those who are born different from them. This emotion is strongest in the most modern Asian country—Japan—but is powerful in all the others. The Chinese have a very strong sense of Chinese-ness; most Koreans scorn "impure" children of Korean-American marriages; the politics of most Asian countries break down on tribal lines (sometimes these are racial and ethnic, as in Malaysia; sometimes regional, as in Korea; sometimes based on clans, as in the Philippines and Indonesia). Asia

James Fallows, an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1972 to 1975, reports for* The Atlantic *from Yokohama, Japan.*

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is not a microcosm for the entire world; but in its belief that tribal ties do *and should* matter strongly, it is more typical of the world than America is.

To most Americans, this tribal outlook sounds terrible—and it clearly is harmful in its effects. (One reason why Japan is happier internally than, say, India is that its sense of "us" includes most people in the country. That is, tribalism warps it only in its dealings with the outside world.) But why, when so many people take the tribal mentality for granted, does it seem to Americans not just inconvenient but "wrong"?

One underlying reason is the Western/Christian concept that every human being is created by the same God and therefore all people have some bond. Obviously the explanation can be taken only so far, since Christianity has coexisted with and even been used to justify slavery, apartheid, holy wars, and other intolerant practices. Still, Christianity and Islam are the two religions with the most powerful evangelical component, based on the idea that everyone regardless of race is a potential convert. (Buddhism is also theoretically universal but in practice leads to less evangelism.) In the background of every mainly Christian culture lurks the suspicion that tribal discriminations are basically wrong.

The other explanation is a specifically American one: the idea that a society *can* be made up of people who did not have a preexisting racial or cultural tie to one another. Yes, the Founding Fathers were nearly all from English or other white Western European backgrounds; yes, they excluded blacks from their social contract and killed off the Indians; yes, the American vision has never been free from tribal bias. What makes America unusual, however, is the goal of a society that accepts individuals regardless of their "tribal" background. This is a goal very few other societies share.

If we think of the United States as a nontribal society in a tribal world, what does that tell us? One possible conclusion, implied in much of what the *Monthly* has said on the subject, is that we should try to convert everyone else to believe as we do. That is noble but completely unrealistic. The only effective conversion America can carry out is case by case, through immigration. (China, India, and the Philippines may remain tribal societies; but Chinese, Indians, and Filipinos who try to become Americans are, by definition, showing a desire to be judged as individuals, not as members of a category or tribe.)

The more sensible conclusion, I think, is a version of the old "Socialism in One Country" theory about Russia. The most admirable thing America stands for is its nontribal, open social ideal. America can best help itself and promote its ideal by doing everything possible to make it work at home. What this means is recognizing the tribal roots of many of our domestic problems—not just black/white differences but also the screw-you spirit of interest-group politics and big-city life. Calling these things "tribalism" does not make them easier to solve, but it does help show why they're particularly offensive to America's unique ideal.

An appreciation of tribalism can also help our foreign policy. The political-science term "nationalism" sounds like a force that waxes and wanes—increasing when Third-World countries are escaping from colonialism, decreasing at other times. In fact, nationalist feelings are another form of tribalism, and as such should be seen as a constant in our dealings with other countries. America stands for certain universal values, like freedom and democracy, and we should never be afraid to recommend those values to others. But we should remember that the values themselves will be much more popular if they're not mixed up with cultural or political subservience to the United States. No matter how popular American movies, music, and blue jeans may be around the world, no other society really wants to be dependent on the United States, England, for example, is culturally closer to America than Vietnam or Nicaragua is, and the English desperately needed U.S. help during World War II. Yet even the Brits after a while got tired of GIs who were over-paid, over-sexed, and (the main problem) "over here." Our values will go farther if they advance other countries' nationalist feelings, not overwhelm them. □

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I've Tilted at Windmills, and the Windmills Won

by Jonathan Alter

Six years ago, I was offered an unusual job at *Newsweek* that was at least partly the result of the efforts of the editor of this magazine. While I'm grateful to Charlie Peters for assisting my career advancement, the job he helped arrange also points up some practical failures associated with his view of how to get the truth out of the bureaucracy.

One of Charlie's all-time heroes in this regard is a woman named Lorena Hickock, a journalist and close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. Hickock traveled across the country during the 1930s and delivered candid reports to the Roosevelts and Harry Hopkins about the way New Deal programs were really working. She deserves Charlie's canonization, for these are models of the kind of journalism that *The Washington Monthly* seeks to publish. Instead of merely reporting the pseudo-important spin of high-level officials, she went out and assessed how their programs were affecting real people. By circumventing the hidebound chain of command, FDR was able to learn what was actually happening in his own administration.

Hickock's success reinforced the lessons of Charlie's own experience at the Peace Corps, where he supervised a crew of independent evaluators who burrowed into programs in an effort to report the truth to the top. In 1978, Charlie convinced James Fallows, then Jimmy Carter's chief speechwriter, to seek a similar arrangement with the Carter White House. Because of opposition from high-level aides, the proposal for a corps of independent evaluators was scotched. Charlie later wrote that perhaps Carter's administration might have been saved had someone like Fallows reported in advance the truth about the preparations for the Iran hostage rescue mission of 1980, which ended in humiliation.

In 1982, Charlie got a chance to try his idea on a much smaller scale. *Newsweek* hired a new editor, William Broyles, who was a fan of the *Monthly*. Partly at Charlie's urging, he soon hired me for a variation on the Hickock role: to report directly to him on what was wrong with *Newsweek*, and to suggest ways to fix it. Ironically, this was a journalistic variation on a role the *Monthly* had traditionally detested—that of the management consultant. But bearing the Hickok and Fallows models in mind, I plunged ahead.

From the start, the idea failed. As anyone who has ever worked in a large organization knows, a person in this role is immediately labeled a spy. Every time I walked into a work area, the collected *Newsweek* writers (many of whom I now count as close friends) would immediately stop talking. A memo I wrote to Broyles outlining suggestions was intercepted and copied for the enjoyment of snickering colleagues. More important, my suggestions for improvements betrayed a lack of understanding of the difference between practical and impractical change. For instance, like some others at *Newsweek*, I thought then and still do that the separation between reporting and writing at newsmagazines usually made little sense. That distinction, in the years since, has been thankfully eroded. But I should have known that it could not be done overnight. Institutions don't turn on dimes. I was operating in a *Washington Monthly*, pie-in-the-sky manner, assuming that once the right answer was found, the argument over change would be settled, when, in fact, it was only beginning. Given my newness, my feel for the corporate culture was naturally weak, which made me a relatively poor source of intelligence about the magazine. After a few months, I left that job and became a regular *Newsweek* staff writer, which I remain today.

My experience with Broyles did not discredit Charlie's vision of how to wring the truth from a bureaucracy, but it did modify it. Yes, the boss must constantly circumvent the chain of command in order to find out what is going on in his organization. One of the most dispiriting days of the 1988 campaign for me was when I interviewed Michael Dukakis on this subject and he disagreed. (Dukakis believes that one should hire good people and question them closely, but obey the chain.) Organization charts really are the enemy of truth and the ally of those who lack confidence in their own leadership abilities. They also often bear little resemblance to the way power actually works in an institution. But Charlie's remedy for the problem was only half right. While gimlet-eyed outsiders can provide a fresh analysis, they do not substitute for informed intelligence from within. Outsiders undertaking evaluation alone will usually be neutralized.

Jonathan Alter, an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1981 to 1983, is a senior writer at* Newsweek.

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FDR, who had extensive experience in the bureaucracy as a former assistant secretary of the Navy, understood this. He used Lorena Hickock. But he also reached down around his Cabinet secretaries and personally quizzed underlings (like Sumner Welles). Outsiders *and* insiders—the pincer effect. Ironically, even at the Peace Corps, Charlie operated from a base of insider knowledge about the organization that put the findings of his heralded group of outside evaluators in the right perspective.

One of the conclusions I've drawn from covering the media is that the outside-inside pincer approach should apply to journalism as well as to life inside a bureaucracy. The best coverage of the White House and presidential campaigns employs this technique. One reporter covers the story from inside, cultivating sources; the other, taking the outsider's perspective, worries much less about offending big-shot officials. One of the reasons *The Washington Post* uncovered Watergate, and the rest of the White House press corps missed it, was that the *Post* employed a variation of this approach. Almost by accident, the paper had an outside team in police beat reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, who cracked the story in part because they had no reason to fear angering the Nixon administration officials. But they got more help than Charlie recognizes from regular *Post* reporters covering the government. Neither approach would have worked alone.

Bureaucracies are all alike, but they are also all different, if you know what I mean. And truth is not always decisive. Even had he won the assignment as all-purpose evaluator, Fallows could not have saved the Iran hostage rescue mission from disaster. The military would never have let him learn enough about the operation to predict convincingly that it would fail, and even if he did somehow learn it, the president would have likely sided with the experts. Only a skeptic from *within* the bureaucracy could have much chance of making a difference.

The *Monthly* prides itself in reporting on how things really work. But too often it sees the world as it wants it to be, rather than as it really is. That is a fair price to pay for an otherwise commendable form of idealism, but it isn't always relevant to daily life. I learned that lesson the hard way. □

Watch What You Call Welfare

by Mickey Kaus

In 1972, when the *Monthly* first proposed cutting the Social Security benefits of the affluent, it was a satisfyingly reckless proposal. Today, this idea—"means-testing"—is alarmingly respectable. Wall Street types like Pete Peterson and Donald Regan endorse it as a deficit-buster. Bruce Babbitt injected it briefly into the 1988 campaign. In Washington it has started to bubble up in conversations with congressional Democrats.

Those conversations are off-the-record, at least for now. In public, Responsible Policymakers declare that benefits should be fully *taxed* but that checks going to the well-to-do should not actually be *cut*. That compromise would preserve the fictional analogy of Social Security with private insurance (private insurance benefits are already taxed). But we can expect even this fig leaf to be blown away in the next budgetary storm. You can raise a lot more money by eliminating benefits than by merely taxing them. In order to finance the current policy of full-benefits-for-the-rich, we must impose a payroll tax of 15.3 percent on the non-retired. Americans have more pressing uses for 15.3 percent of their wages than subsidizing the summer vacations of the Annenbergs.

My purpose isn't to congratulate the *Monthly* for its prescience, because the *Monthly*'s "gospel" has changed as dramatically as the establishment's. Originally, the magazine's means-test heresy was part of its endorsement of Milton Friedman's idea of a guaranteed income ("Abolish Social Security," January 1972). Friedman's goal was to eliminate virtually all government benefit programs—not just Social Security but also Aid to Families with Dependent Children (welfare), unemployment compensation, public housing, Medicaid, and farm subsidies—and replace them with one, big means-tested program that gave money to anyone who, for whatever reason, didn't have enough. The virtue of Friedman's plan was its simplicity. There would be no crazy-quilt of competing entitlements, no double-dipping, no bureaucratic turf fights, no nosy moralistic social workers asking welfare mothers whether anybody in the house could be working. Wasn't the point of welfare—like Social Security, unemployment compensation and the rest—really just to get checks to people who needed money? Yes, agreed the *Monthly*. When President Nixon actual-

Mickey Kaus, an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1978 to 1981, is a senior editor of* The New Republic.

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ly proposed a variant of the guaranteed income, the *Monthly*'s Taylor Branch called its defeat a "tragedy."

Today's *Monthly* doctrine has been considerably modified. Charles Peters now, sensibly, calls for a "work requirement" for anyone getting government checks. "Those under 65 should be required to accept any job they can perform. Welfare mothers with infant children should be given work that can be done at home." So much for Friedman's and Nixon's guaranteed income, the essence of which, as Branch noted, "defined away all the moral questions about whether a person should work by looking strictly at income."

Yet while Peters has abandoned the amorality of the Friedman and Nixon plans, he clings to the idea of One Big Means-Tested Program. In the latest update of the *Monthly* gospel (Peters's book, *Tilting at Windmills*) he writes, "The answer is to consolidate all income maintenance programs—Social Security, unemployment compensation, veterans' pensions, welfare, workers' compensation—into one program that will insure each of us against need."

Bandits

I hate to be the sort who attacks Peters's, or anyone's political ideas as too simple. That's usually the tactic of people who don't have the guts to change the status quo. (Ask Mario Cuomo for his welfare plan and he'll chastise you for expecting him to be able to talk about such a complex subject in a few sentences. This is the surest indication that he has no plan at all.) But the Peters proposal *is* too simple. It lumps together groups that should be clearly separated.

First, Peters tries to cover, in a single program, the poor who are not expected to work (such as those over 65) along with those who are expected to work (such as welfare mothers). The former would get government checks; the latter would get checks but be "required" to take jobs. Presumably if a welfare mother, for example, refused to work she would lose her benefits. This sounds fine in theory, and indeed, work "requirements" are a key feature of current welfare reform efforts. In practice, they don't work very well. Political common sense tells you it's very hard for the government to take away benefits people already have. Experience with welfare reform so far confirms this fear.

Better not to give people the cash in the first place. Have two separate programs: one that sends checks to seniors and others not expected to work; another that offers a guaranteed *job*, but not a check, to the able-bodied, including welfare mothers. If a welfare mother refused the job, she would be on her own. No "requirements." No bureaucratic "sanctions." Simple, even.

Peters also lumps together in his One Big Program two groups of people over 65: those who *have worked* during their working lives and those who haven't. The distinction isn't trivial. If the government expects the able-bodied to work, it makes sense to treat those who have fulfilled this expectation more generously than those who haven't. In fact, the government does this now. We already have a guaranteed-income program for seniors—not Social Security, but a Nixon-era program called SSI (Supplemental Security Income). Anyone over a certain age can get SSI whether they've worked a day in their life or not, and that's as it should be. (The main problem with SSI is that the benefits for single elderly men and women are scandalously low—about $400 a month in many states.)

Social Security is supposed to be different—a more generous program for retirees who have worked (and paid Social Security contributions) for a minimum number of quarters. That's as it should be too. The problem with Social Security isn't that it gives ex-workers something extra. The problem is that today's ex-workers have neglected to pay for all the extra they are getting. As a result the program is generationally unfair. Current recipients are making out like bandits, getting back many times what they paid in. Meanwhile, today's younger workers will be lucky to get out of the system even as much as they are paying in. But we can cure this generational problem, and save the system from bankruptcy, by cutting the benefits of the affluent (means-testing).

Once we've done that, there's no reason not to keep Social Security as a separate pension program for ex-workers. There are, in fact, perfectly good justifications for a very generous middle-class Social Security system, if we are willing to pay for it. Socialized pensions are more efficient than private pensions because they save advertising and sales costs. They contain a defensible element of paternalism, protecting the elderly who might not save their money or who might blow their IRAs by investing them in pork rind futures. It's wrong to think all government programs should give money only to the poorest.

Ultimately, by treating Social Security as just another "relief" scheme to be rolled into the One Big Plan, the *Monthly* joins company with the most cynical opponents of means-testing—status-quo liberals who say that if benefits didn't go to rich and poor alike it would "make Social Security a welfare program." No it wouldn't. Social Security isn't welfare and will never be welfare because, unlike either AFDC or SSI, it pays benefits only to those who have worked—which is precisely why it can be safely means-tested without making recipients feel as if they are on the dole. When Charles Peters glosses over the "have worked/haven't worked" distinction, he gives ammunition to the opponents of the very reform—means-testing—he's finally pushed to the brink of respectability. □

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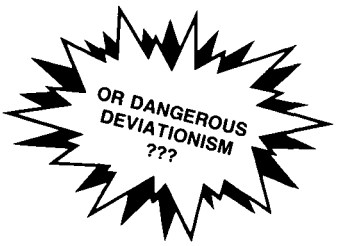

Neoliberals in the Wilderness

by Walter Shapiro

About the same time Charlie Peters was boldly launching this magazine in early 1969, an obscure 29-year-old conservative political analyst was putting the final touches on a book that would chart with eerie precision the rough political waters that lay ahead. The author was Kevin Phillips and the prophetic book was, of course, *The Emerging Republican Majority.* Its cover depicted Richard Nixon's 1968 triumph with the kind of color-coded map that has since become all too familiar to election night TV viewers: an uninterrupted blotch of Republican red stretching from Virginia to California. For as Phillips foretold in his opening sentence, Nixon's ascendancy "bespoke the end of the New Deal Democratic hegemony and the beginning of a new era in American politics."

How obvious it all seems now, but how obtuse we were then. Unveiling a liberal political magazine in 1969, inspired by the failures of Lyndon Johnson, turned out to be akin to starting a Republican journal in 1933 designed to be a corrective to Herbert Hoover. Laudable in theory, but a tad irrelevant during the next five terms of FDR and Harry Truman. Of course, when I joined the *Monthly* after the debacle of the 1972 election, at a time when every Volvo still defiantly brandished a McGovern sticker, there still was an unmistakable sense that the Nixon era was merely a painful period of penance before liberal Democrats would regain their rightful place in the White House. The Democrats were America's natural governing party; the Republicans were just the cynical beneficiaries of the nation's anguish over Vietnam, civil rights, and the countercultural revolt.

All through the Nixon years, the *Monthly* maintained a certain disdainful distance, as if the Republicans' handiwork was too ephemeral to be taken seriously. The magazine was never designed as a nonpartisan journal of public administration; we regarded ourselves as a kind of teaching tool for right-thinking Democrats. The cautionary lessons about the culture of bureaucracy and the need for independent program analysis presupposed an administration that shared the *Monthly*'s liberal goals. Each article was a potential object lesson for the next Democratic president. Each restatement of the magazine's Gospel was a sermon to remind the faithful of the follies that had destroyed LBJ and the Great Society. Even the sharp ad hominem attacks on liberal hypocrisy were largely a heuristic device; the unstated goal was always to instruct the Democrats to shape up so they could govern better.

After 20 years of struggle and sacrifice, after 20 years of near-miraculous survival, all the magazine has to show for its political ambitions is the false spring of Jimmy Carter. I served in the Carter administration both as press secretary to Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall and as a White House speechwriter. About the time I left the *Monthly*'s scruffy quarters for a wood-paneled office with a wall of windows overlooking the Capitol and the East Wing of The National Gallery, I remember friends saying, "I'd like to serve in government someday, but I think I'll wait for a more congenial Democrat." They are, I assume, still patiently waiting.

Even now I regard those years, and the policy failures that accompanied them, with a set of conflicting emotions. How long ago it all seems—and how young we were then. Just writing these words rekindles the heady self-importance of being close to the levers of power, working just two offices away from the place where other people made epic decisions. Many of the *Monthly*'s lectures on the evils of bureaucracy proved all too true; if anything, the magazine had badly understated the case. But in those days there was the beguiling sense that our time in office was virtually limitless and opportunities, even if squandered, would inevitably come

Walter Shapiro, an editor of The Washington Monthly *from 1972 to 1976, is now a senior writer for* Time.

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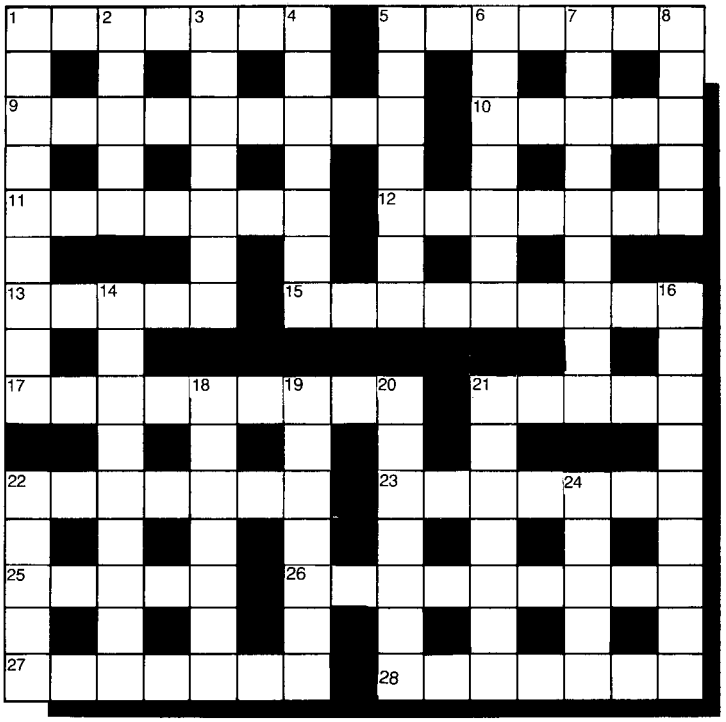
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



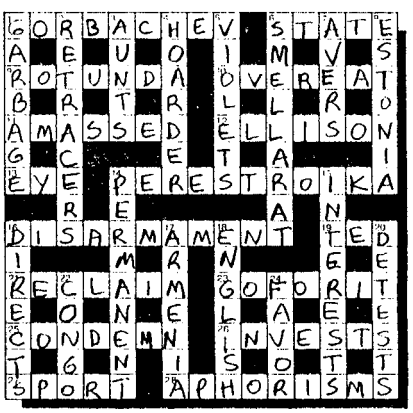
ACROSS

1. Congress's first step is easy rip-off. (3,4)
5. Second in line for president makes Beth err. (7)
9. Lender 199 scheme took everybody in. (9)
10. Not an upset, Dvorak coming in second. (5)
11. Very unhappy, becoming nastier. (2,5)
12. In response to gross affront, a riot developed in Canada. (7)
13. Merits snare development. (5)
15. Important tournament for citizens only? (9)
17. Change arms front deployment. (9)
21. Fix up Roman lord's house. (5)
22. Pull female back for slowpoke. (7)
23. Keep around end of November to educate for new position. (7)
25. Alert for one sign of passage? (5)
26. Throw a doll a bar for departure line. (3,6)
27. Yes-men not paying attention? (7)
28. Spin-doctors pass a week among seniors. (7)

DOWN

1. Key figure in Washington ends tripe mess. (9)
2. Expensive toy for the first of your American corporate heavy traders. (5)
3. Beachheads with no exits? (7)
4. Carefully sell ion for writer. (7)
5. Special hue? Do it to avoid attention. (4,3)
6. Recast ET actor to respond directly. (5,2)
7. To rouse tenant ire take in guests. (9)
8. Ring fly comes up for dance. (5)
14. Urge radar set up for protective force. (4,5)
16. Red sedans playing music. (9)
18. People of Southeast Asia see aims developed. (7)
19. Slow day restored tribal heritage. (3,4)
20. Men in conjunction with team spirits. (7)
21. Somewhat lame but not permanent. (7)
22. Find a way in the midst of unclearness. (5)
24. Saw promotion time. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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round again. For me, maturity has brought with it the acknowledgement of my minor complicity in the folly that often surrounded me. But in the early days of Ronald Reagan, no one seemed much interested in my belated recognition that government is far too important to again be entrusted to a Carter-era children's crusade.

Doomed to irrelevance?

It has now been a decade since I abandoned any form of partisan involvement and embarked on a career in mainstream journalism. My ties to the *Monthly* are now those of affection, gratitude, and nostalgia, but they are enough to compel me to try to temper some of the mood of self-congratulation that inevitably accompanies an anniversary issue such as this. Through an accident of timing, the magazine has been doomed to spend most of its adolescence and all of its adult years on the wrong side of history. By 1992, when George Bush is running for reelection after four years of protecting the Pledge of Allegiance from all enemies domestic and foreign, the Democrats will have spent 20 of the preceding 24 years fantasizing about being invited to an Inaugural Ball. For the *Monthly* that will have meant two decades of publishing a political magazine while the White House was in the hands of men for whom neoliberalism is as alien an ideology as Free Masonry.

Each political cycle invariably raises the hope that this time around the Democrats will nominate a candidate animated by the magazine's causes and crusades. Bruce Babbitt was the repository of these laudable dreams in 1988 and perhaps he or someone else more telegenic will bravely venture forth under the same banners in 1992. But my own pessimistic sense is that in political terms the neoliberalism that the *Monthly* holds dear may already be a lost cause. Certainly, it should be gratifying to the magazine when the august *New York Times* entitles a lead editorial, "Target Social Security on the Needy." Alas, in a Republican era, politically unorthodox but worthy ideas no longer follow the traditional transmission belt from a small magazine to *The New York Times* to a bright White House aide to the president. Michael Dukakis was never a *Washington Monthly* pinup hero, but the magazine's policy agenda may be permanently tarred by the abject failure of his end-to-ideology blandness. After the third landslide defeat in this decade, the Democrats may be permanently wary of nominating another candidate who purports to redefine liberalism into a more persuasive package.

With all the humility that should accompany any three-years-in-advance political forecast, my own guess is that in 1992 the Democrats are apt to lurch either sharply to the left (Jesse Jackson) or the right (Lloyd Bentsen or a younger Southern Tory). Either way, I fear that the *Monthly*'s hard-wrought Gospel will be left on the cutting-room floor. While Jackson is the kind of transforming political leader who may someday succeed by the sheer audacity of his dreams, he is also the least likely figure in either party to lie awake nights wrestling with the knotty dilemmas of bureaucratic accountability. Were a Bentsen to be nominated, he would take the *Monthly*'s policy advice very seriously. That is, so long as it was ratified by a blue-ribbon panel of experts chaired by Robert Strauss.

None of this dour prophesy should suggest that the *Monthly* is doomed to irrelevance. Rather, the magazine should take the lead in grappling with a problem that we all in our individual ways should have confronted long ago: how to live fulfilling, public-spirited lives in uncongenial times. Looking back over the past 20 years, the magazine's enduring worth does not stem from its determined, grab-them-by-the-collar insistence on telling its readers how Washington really works—or, more precisely, how it should work. Far more important than the governmental agenda that the *Monthly* has loudly championed has been its often iconoclastic obsession with values and attitudes ranging from the loss of any national ethos of shared sacrifice to the destructive effects of class snobbery. For the sad truth of this dispiriting age, dominated by a mass culture that glorifies glitz and greed, lies in the ease with which almost all of us can become enveloped by the smug trappings of conventional success.

Speaking for myself, I know that after five years in Manhattan, I have become gradually inured to the world that surrounds me. Not the homeless on the street; they still possess that rare ability to horrify and shock. But all too often the contours of my life seem reduced to a typical cover headline in *New York* magazine: "Where to Go/What to Buy/What to Wear/Where to Eat/What to Read." Left to my own devices, I sometimes fear that someday I could end up like a character in that 1940s New York advertising novel, *The Hucksters*, sitting in a fancy bar and musing into my glass of Scotch, "Was an apartment on Park Avenue and a country home in Connecticut worth it? How far can a man go just to have the price of a mink coat in his pocket?"

Of course, the price of a mink coat aside, it isn't going to happen. And one reason is because each month there lands in my mailbox a small, funny-shaped magazine with a quirky fixation on such unfashionable virtues as integrity, responsibility and altruism. Sure, it's preachy and a bit naive. But even so, it's still a magazine that speaks to how I live. I guess you could say I'm just that *Washington Monthly* kind of guy. □

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Et Tu, Keisling?

by Charles Peters

Like everyone else who has worked here, I have my own frustrations with what the *Monthly* has been unable to do and my own embarrassment with the times the *Monthly* has been wrong. As to the latter, I obviously agree with Mickey Kaus that we were wrong in the early seventies to support a guaranteed annual income without a work requirement because we have since changed our position to support such a requirement. As to the frustrations, my greatest has been our inability to find and write about organizations that work, to complement our ample coverage of those that don't. This frustration has been most acute in the case of our futile search for poverty programs that work. As I look to the future, no mission for the *Monthly* seems more important to me than helping to end the degradation of the underclass by freeing it from the drugs and hopelessness and cynicism that now overwhelm it.

It also seems to me that, in our effort to expose and correct the follies of liberalism, we have given insufficient attention to the subjects on which we are in substantial agreement with our fellow liberals. One of these is the cause of racial justice.

Another is the environment, which is why I find myself sympathetic to the comments made by Phil Keisling and Arthur Levine. While it is true that we have published at least a dozen pieces expressing environmental concern, beginning with one in our first issue deploring the then complete lack of control of pollution from automobiles, and that last year I urged Michael Dukakis to make the environment the number one issue in his campaign, I agree that we haven't done enough on the environment and the dangers posed to it by uncontrolled economic growth.

I disagree with Levine, however, to the extent that I am convinced that without economic growth, we won't have the tax revenues necessary to clean up the environmental mess that already exists. But I join nim in believing that economic growth must be attained without adding to the mess.

With one of the foregoing essays—by Nicholas Lemann—I'm in complete agreement. In the case of six others—Joseph Nocera, Walter Shapiro, Mickey Kaus, Steven Waldman, Jonathan Alter, and James Fallows—I concur with much of what they say but do, as with Levine's, have some points of dissent.

I agree with Nocera that journalism cannot deal with the dark night of the soul, which means we'll always need the Dostoevskys. I once was even ready to concede that modern fiction might be able to illuminate social problems in a way that reporting could not. Twelve years ago the *Monthly* attempted to create a fiction section and named a talented young novelist, Garrett Epps, as its editor. But that great fiction about social problems that should have been out there quite simply wasn't, and we had to abandon the section. We continue, as Matthew Cooper indicated in our December issue, to hope that a new Dickens will appear. But in the meantime, I think that journalists in the *Monthly*'s tradition, like Nocera with his article on T. Boone Pickens and Taylor Branch with his splendid book on Martin Luther King, are doing a better job of bringing alive the problems of contemporary society than any current novelist.

Won't be wasting a dime

With Walter Shapiro, my only disagreement comes when he says "neoliberalism is a lost cause." Don't give up, Walter. Our views on national defense and entrepreneurship are shared by far more people than they were 20 years ago. Our case against credentialism is making progress in the public schools, where there's less emphasis on the education degree and more emphasis on whether a teacher really knows his subject and can teach it. Even in the case that seemed most impossible of all—taking entitlements away from affluent beneficiaries of these programs—taxes were enacted on unemployment compensation in 1979 and on Social Security in 1983, which means that the rich get to keep less. And after the Dukakis debacle it seems likely that liberal in-

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tellectuals will finally join us in understanding that it's not a good idea to scorn the average man's patriotism and his concern about crime.

I share some of Mickey Kaus's concerns about my income maintenance plan but at the same time I'm depressed at his failure to understand the liberating nature of the concept of insurance against need as opposed to the concept of entitlement.

Too many of the affluent elderly think they should receive Social Security because they're entitled to it. And too many teenage mothers think they're entitled to a lifetime on welfare without work. The present system thus encourages greed and selfishness while wasting a vast amount of money on people who don't need it or don't deserve it. That's why I think we should abandon the idea of entitlement and replace it with insurance against need, insurance that we would collect only in the event misfortune strikes or the time for retirement comes and we don't have enough money to live on. As with insurance against cancer or an auto accident, which we don't expect to collect unless we get cancer or have an accident, we would collect only if we are needy. If we are under 65, we should not collect if we refuse to work. I agree with Kaus that payments for the elderly needy should be more generous than they are today as should those to the poor who are involuntarily unemployed in those states where the payments are now inadequate, such as Mississippi. Money would be available to do this because we won't be wasting a dime on the affluent as several of our income maintenance programs do today.

But I don't want the affluent to feel left out. I'm going to let them pay for the program. It should be financed by additional income taxes on them and on profitable corporations. The present Social Security tax is a cruel burden on both the working poor and struggling businesses.

Anyone who knows the *Monthly* will understand that I share Steven Waldman's scorn for quantified measures of performance that are stupidly oversimplified and that I agree with his belief that government merit pay is a joke and with his conviction that people who worry constantly about how much they are making are in deep spiritual trouble. I also share his concern for the morale of those workers whose best efforts produce only average performances. And I understand why he thinks it is often wiser to reward the group rather than the individual. But I'm assuming that the members of the group are all average and above average.

I differ from Waldman in my strong belief that those who consistently give less than their best or whose performance is consistently *below* average should not get raises and would be better off looking for a job that they are genuinely enthusiastic about and that they can do well. They will only be encouraged to stay in the wrong job by the kind of across-the-board salary increases or other forms of reward that unions advocate and that Waldman seems to support. I realize that the reality of one's inadequacy is sometimes extremely painful to contemplate. I was 34 and had endured a good deal of that pain before I finally found a job that I felt I was both competent to do and totally enthusiastic about. But I'm better off because I faced the fact that I could not star on the football field, sing at the Met, or dance with Baryshnikov.

I agree with James Fallows that the main way America can fight tribalism is by its own example. But I also think that diplomatically we need to do everything possible to encourage the warring tribes to live together peacefully. And if that seems impossible, encourage their separation by relocation or by redrawing boundaries that were often created for the convenience of the colonial powers, and if necessary, by providing troops as part of an international peacekeeping force to create a buffer zone between them. I also believe it is important to introduce third-country nationals such as Peace Corps volunteers into countries where tribal hostilities exist. As the introduction of northern businessmen into Atlanta, Georgia after World War II proved, the presence of outsiders who simply don't share the hatred can help reduce it.

I agree with most of Jonathan Alter's corollaries to the Lorena Hickock gospel. But he errs in thinking Fallows could not have found out why Desert One wouldn't work. In fact, David Martin, then a reporter for Alter's own publication, *Newsweek*, was able to uncover the whole story just months after the event. He learned, for example, that before the mission the Delta Commandos were fearful that the marine helicopter pilots could not do the job. This fear turned out to be well founded and would have been easily discovered by an intelligent interviewer who took the trouble to talk to the troops instead of to just colonels and generals.

In addition to Ernie Pyle's secret of interviewing the fellows who are actually on the firing line, there is a second important point about getting the truth out of bureaucracy. Rivalries, as FDR knew with Harry Hopkins and Harold Ickes, can be exploited in the pursuit of the truth. The Army will be a lot quicker to tell you what's wrong with the Navy than what's wrong with itself. But Pyle's point is the most important of all. Remember the *Challenger* disaster. It was the engineers at the operating level, not senior NASA executives, who would have blown the whistle if they had just been asked. I want people like them throughout the government questioned about what works and what

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doesn't, questioned by skilled reporters like Fallows and Hickock. As few as 50 journalists of their ability and dedication reporting directly to the president could dramatically improve this government. As things stand now, far too many policy analysts in the executive office of the president sit at their desks crunching numbers with little or no feel for what is really happening at the operational end.

Trading Kinsley

When I read Gregg Easterbrook or Michael Kinsley I usually find myself nodding in agreement, but such is not the case with their contributions to this issue. Easterbrook is wrong in suggesting I object to profits. I don't. I certainly wish the *Monthly* had more. What I do object to is the pressure capitalism exerts to *maximize* profit. Easterbrook asks what's wrong with maximizing profit? What's wrong is that it encourages corporations to take chances with worker safety, to pollute the air, to attempt to gain monopoly control of markets. He also asks what's wrong with mergers. What's wrong with mergers is that they take capital—capital that could be used to finance the research that would produce new and better and more competitive products or to build new plants and create new jobs—and use it to acquire existing plants, which do not increase jobs or the quality of the product. Easterbrook also wants to know what's wrong with absentee owners. They are of course not necessarily evil, but he should visit my home state to find out why they tend to be less than benign. In West Virginia, absentee owners polluted the air because they and their children didn't have to breath it. They scarred the hillsides and defiled the streams for similar reasons—they didn't have to fish in those streams and look at those scars.

I share Michael Kinsley's dislike of coercion and I would share his opposition to a national service draft—if the rich were doing their part in the military or if enough of the rest of us were volunteering to help those in need in our communities. But the truth is that enough of us aren't volunteering and that the record of the rich in regard to military service has been nothing short of despicable for the past 25 years. Kinsley says "there aren't a lot of Groton graduates" in the military. The truth is there have been practically none during all those years. My answer to Nicholas Von Hoffman is that the rich old man's money *has* been drafted—to bribe someone less well off to do the serving for the rich man's son. National defense should be the common responsibility of us all. Until the day of world disarmament, we will need a strong military to deter the hardliners who could seize power in Russia or some other country powerful enough to attack us or our friends. Military service even in peacetime involves a risk of life—remember Pearl Harbor and the marine barracks in Beirut—that it is morally wrong to bribe others to take. I believe it is our duty to share that risk. But Kinsley tells the rich: Don't worry, you don't have to do your duty—if you did you would be taking someone else's job. That argument was very persuasive to rich Northerners during the Civil War who paid poor substitutes to do their duty for them.

This indifference to duty is not a problem just with the upper class. It is equally great with today's meritocratic elite who seem devoted to imitating the rich in this as in so many other unfortunate respects. So they join the rich in their isolation from the rest of the country, an isolation that is compounded by their withdrawing their children from the public schools. There is something very wrong with this. I saw something different as I grew up in the World War II era when the schools and the draft did bring people together. I have no hesitation in saying that, in that respect, the old days were better.

It will take years to bring the public schools back to the level of quality that will attract upper-class children. But we could institute a draft tomorrow and at least have one social institution that made it possible for all classes to come to know and understand one another.

Upper-class participation in the military would give people with clout a compelling interest in avoiding war and, in case war turns out to be unavoidable, in being equipped with weapons that work. Thus a draft of the wealthy would both aid military reformers and enhance the prospect for peace.

As for Kinsley's argument that upper-class service would deprive some of the not-so-well-off of jobs, let me recall the film *Trading Places* to suggest what I think will happen. Of course, when Kinsley leaves for Fort Dix, he won't be replaced by an Eddie Murphy—although the prospect of an Eddie Murphy at *The New Republic* is not without its delights. What is more likely to happen is that someone at *The New Republic* will move up to replace Kinsley and that he in turn will be replaced by a smart copy writer from J. Walter Thompson who wants to put his talents to more serious purpose. *He* will be replaced by a fellow from Thompson's billing department who has always wanted to do something more creative. This will cause a series of promotions in the billing department that will leave open an entry-level position for a bright high-school graduate who was about to be persuaded by all those "Be All That You Can Be" commercials. Now he has a job. And Kinsley can cheerfully go about his duties at Fort Dix, secure in the comfort that he has not contributed to the nation's unemployment problem. □

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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Somoza Falling. Anthony Lake. *Houghton Mifflin, $18.95.* Few events in recent times have been hashed over as frequently as the Nicaraguan revolution. Anybody choosing to write about it now, ten years after the fact, should have a compelling reason. Anthony Lake offers his in the preface to his book. A veteran of the State Department, Lake describes how he left Washington in 1981 to teach at Mount Holyoke College, only to find that his students had a seriously twisted view of how U.S. foreign policy is made. He wrote this book to help set them straight. "What does a member of the National Security Council staff do every day?" he asks. "What is it like to be an assistant secretary?" Lake uses Somoza's overthrow as a case study.

Somoza Falling reads like a handbook for bright graduate students intent on entering the foreign service. Worried about telephone protocol? *Somoza Falling* offers some useful guidelines. ("The junior officer defers to the senior by coming on the line first, so the latter is not kept waiting. This requires very nice judgement by the secretaries who initially place and receive most calls.") Concerned about getting around the State Department? *Somoza Falling* provides a floor-by-floor guide. (If an official is sighted carrying a memo "in an ascending elevator, the text of a draft is probably being delivered to some superior. If in a corridor, the hurried official is probably off to persuade a counterpart in some other bureau to clear such a draft before it can go upstairs.") Since the windows at the State Department don't open, offices can grow uncomfortably warm, but *Somoza Falling* offers a solution: "An enterprising occupant may be able to adjust the heating with a bent paper clip. Bribery or pleading may elicit a window key from one of the maintenance people. . . ." There are tips on parking (country directors are just senior enough to get a coveted spot in the basement lot), food at the cafeteria ("somewhere between edible and enjoyable"), and weekend attire (sport shirts and tennis shorts are acceptable, blue jeans are not).

Lake introduces us to a series of mid-level bureaucrats, each of them heroic in his own small way. Patricia Haigh, a junior economics officer at the embassy in Managua, inadvertently gets caught in a firefight, then rushes back to the embassy with dirt on her face to announce that there's "a war out there." Deputy chief of mission Tom O'Donnell is "a good-humored, unflappable professional," assistant secretary William Bowdler conveys "an extraordinary sense of solid dignity," and NSC aide Robert Pastor works such long hours that he never gets to eat at home.

Oddly, Lake, while so reverential toward the policymakers, finds little to praise in the policy itself. In his view, Washington failed in its goal of replacing Somoza with a "moderate alternative" and thus staving off a Sandinista victory. The overworked bureaucrats in Washington, distracted by crises elsewhere, failed to give Nicaragua the attention it deserved. By the time the NSC and State Department finally agreed on what to do about Somoza, the Sandinistas were already on the outskirts of Managua. This is a reasonable analysis, but the same story is told in Robert Pastor's *Condemned to Repetition*, which appeared in 1987 and which Lake cites repeatedly.

Equally familiar is Lake's prescription for putting things right. Policymakers, he writes, need "an understanding of the past causes of revolutionary explosions." To that end, Lake provides a list of eight elements common to revolutions—vast social changes, restrictions on access to the political process, repression, etc. "If a policymaker finds himself dealing with a situation in which every item on the checklist seems present," he writes, "it is probably time for the kind of crisis that wonderfully concentrates the mind."

Lake also urges the foreign service to recruit better people. Noting the woeful quality of the intelligence estimates provided on Nicaragua, he recommends an increase in the "number and influence of career experts" in Washington. "Sooner or later," he maintains, "presidents and the nation they serve pay a serious price when the voices of the government's middle-level experts are either unclear or ignored."

After eight years of Reaganism, it's hard to argue with this. The fanatical exploits of ideologues like Elliott Abrams and Oliver North have done the foreign service a great service, making people pine for the good old days when cautious bureaucrats held sway. Under the reign of James Baker, career officers are sure to make a comeback. Already the job of ambassador to the United Nations, traditionally reserved for big-name windbags, has gone to Thomas Pickering, as pin-striped a professional as Washington has to offer.

Yet one has to wonder how much better the career people will do. Somehow the image conjured up by *Somoza Falling*—that of mid-level experts sitting in their overheated offices, poring over eight-point checklists—does not inspire much confidence. Certainly the professionals lauded in *Somoza Falling*—people like Warren Christopher, William Bowdler, and Viron Vaky—did not do all that well, especially in the case of Nicaragua.

The real problem runs much deeper than *Somoza Falling* indicates. The foreign service is hardly the repository of courage that Lake makes it out to be. The term "career diplomat" cuts both ways. It connotes someone who brings a professional touch to diplomacy and someone who

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makes a career of it. When professionalism and careerism conflict, the outcome, sadly, is rarely in doubt. Take a place like Zaire. Any truly professional diplomat stationed there cannot help but be appalled by the corruption and brutality of Mobutu's rule, but Mobutu is our friend, and sending uncomplimentary cables about him would not enhance one's career prospects.

And while the government could certainly use more "men and women who understand foreign societies," as Lake asserts, the reality is that such men and women rarely get listened to in Washington. Diplomats who become too attuned to local populations and their needs risk being accused of "clientism"—or worse.

Perhaps the most notorious case is that of John Paton Davies, the legendary foreign service officer who served in China in the 1930s and 1940s. As described in David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest*, Davies knew as much about China as anyone, having spent much of his boyhood and part of his college years there. Fluent in Chinese, steeped in the country's culture and history, Davies had a broad range of contacts in China; based on them, he concluded that revolution was inevitable. He indicated as much in his cables to Washington and recommended that the State Department establish ties with the Communists. The department ignored him, of course; what's more, when Mao finally triumphed, Davies, rather than be rewarded for his prescience, was accused of having "lost" China. During the McCarthy years he was subjected to no less than nine investigations; though cleared, Davies was broken by the experience, and he eventually moved to Peru to open a furniture factory.

His experience left a deep imprint on other foreign service officers, who concluded that honesty and accuracy did not always advance careers. As Halberstam relates, such an attitude helped lead us into the war in Vietnam: "The Americans who followed John Davies would be very different; they were determined to impose American versions and definitions of events upon Asian peoples."

The Best and the Brightest first appeared 15 years ago, but, rereading it recently, I was struck by how familiar it all seems. Halberstam's account of U.S. policymaking on Vietnam uncannily anticipates the Reagan experience in Central America. In both cases, those in charge of making policy knew next to nothing about the regions in their charge, and they had only contempt for those who did. Both Vietnam and Central America show the need for career diplomats to speak out and professional appointees to listen. The extent of the madness became evident during the Iran-contra hearings, when no less an official than Robert McFarlane observed that he was reluctant to suggest a more conciliatory approach toward Nicaragua lest William Casey or Jeane Kirkpatrick brand him a communist.

As far as parking and phone calls go, *Somoza Falling* is a reliable guide. But aspiring diplomats eager to learn how Foggy Bottom really works had better look elsewhere.

—*Michael Massing*

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Firefighters: Their Lives in Their Own Words. Dennis Smith. *Doubleday, $18.95.* When I was a teenager, I wanted to be a fireman. This desire came not from hearing sirens and watching firetrucks, but from reading Smith's bestseller *Report From Engine Company 82*. I was convinced that no job could be as pure and good as fighting fires and saving lives, and this adolescent belief has been largely reaffirmed by Smith's latest book.

Kierkegaard said, "Purity of heart is to will one thing." If this is true, then firefighters have the purest of hearts. The one thing they will is to put out fires. According to Smith, "You go out on a job, you eat some smoke, you take a little heat, and you get the great satisfaction of confronting the flames and defeating them." Purity of heart is to will one thing: death to the flames.

This book of interviews with paid and volunteer firefighters reveals that these civil servants do not worry about ambiguity. Firefighters are "all fundamentally good guys who care about other people," says one; "I joined the fire department because I believe in the individual in American society, individuals helping each other," says another. Who can argue with this?

Of course, firefighters are not saints. Smith describes the language around a firehouse as scatological: he once heard a firefighter use the "F word" 63 times in a commentary on the staleness of a bagel. (And the word wasn't fire.) There is prejudice in fire departments, directed against minorities. And firefighting can strain a family, since it requires so much time away from home. "But the fire department is my first love and always will be my first love," says one fireman. "When duty calls, I have to go."

From this kind of zeal comes courage, and courage is needed if a person is going to walk into flames and thick smoke and rescue people. You can't be lukewarm about a job that requires battling fires in ships, grain elevators, highrises, warehouses, and slums, constantly risking burns, smoke inhalation, and building collapses. But no firefighter is alone. Camaraderie grows from the things that firefighters see: "the shared grief, the loss of another fireman, the loss of a child at a fire, the unspeakable things."

Strangely enough, there is one simple innovation that would reduce the danger, a change that all firefighters would welcome: mandatory sprinkler laws. Sprinkler systems are extremely effective in stopping fire; in fact, there have never been multiple deaths in a building with an operational sprinkler system. But, according to Smith, politicians are in the pockets of the real estate and construction moguls who know that sprinkler installation cuts profits, so there are very few residential sprinkler laws in the United States. Voters should know, and will one thing: laws requiring sprinklers in all buildings. The passage of such laws would make us all firefighters, and would save 8,000 lives a year.

—*Henry G. Brinton*

City for Sale: Ed Koch and the Betrayal of New York. Jack Newfield, Wayne Barrett. *Harper & Row, $22.50.* "Today's reformer is tomorrow's hack," Brooklyn boss Meade Esposito used to say. Esposito had a special knack for making this motto a self-fulfilling prophesy. Surely one of his greatest triumphs was the sell-out he and other New York City machine bosses orchestrated around Ed Koch. When he was elected mayor in 1977 Koch's reputation rested on his antimachine credentials. But by 1982, he was kicking off an ill-fated gubernatorial campaign with a press conference flanked by Democratic party bosses—Bronx boss Stanley Friedman (convicted in 1987 for bribery and racketeering), Queens boss Donald Manes (who committed suicide in 1986 while under investigation), and Esposito (convicted in 1988 for bribing Rep. Mario Biaggi). The reformer had come full circle.

That is the central story of *City for Sale*, written by *Village Voice* reporters Jack Newfield—who moved to the New York *Daily News* in mid-1988—and Wayne Barrett. The book's timing is particularly apt, as it was released during the Bess Myerson trial (which had featured testimony from the mayor himself). And in January yet another city hall patronage scandal began breaking, with revelations that the bosses exposed in this book used a Koch-initiated affirmative action program to place their hacks in key city agencies. With the mayoral primary coming in September, investigative journalists and opportunistic opponents are going to have a field day examining the paper trail of corruption. *City for Sale* may be the first book to document the corruption in Koch's ad-

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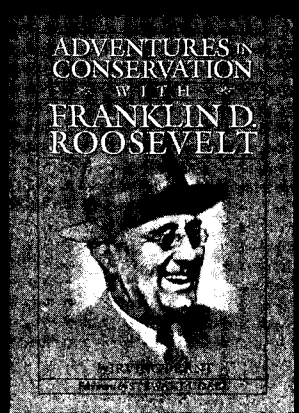

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ministration, but it probably won't be the last.

Municipal corruption in New York has a lustrous history. Koch knew exactly how to play this legacy to voters. A liberal congressman from an ultraliberal Manhattan district, Koch had a history of reform that was almost as deep-seated as his ambition. To be elected mayor of the entire city in 1977, however, required several measures designed to distance himself from the image of the goo-goo from Greenwich Village. One way was to parade about with Myerson, the politically connected former Miss America, to thwart rumors that Koch was a homosexual. The second strategy was to publicly support the death penalty, a popular issue with which Koch could needle two of his strongest primary opponents, Bella Abzug and Mario Cuomo.

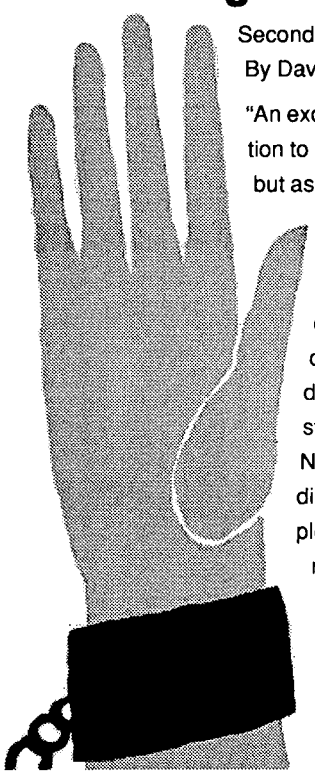
But the final and most devastating deception was cutting deals with the party machines. Koch's platform was staunchly antimachine. His campaign slogan—"After eight years of charisma and four years of the clubhouse, why not try competence?"—was aimed at incumbent Abraham Beame, a crony of Esposito's who had put the city in financial ruin. Privately, however, Koch knew he could not win without machine support. In a tight New York campaign there is simply no substitute for the logistical aid—petitioning, clubhouse endorsements, palm cards, phone banking—that the machines dispense. This became clearest after the September 1977 primary, in which he and Cuomo finished with the most votes, requiring a runoff election. Koch badly needed the Brooklyn and Bronx votes that only the machine could deliver, but he couldn't afford the negative publicity of being endorsed by a party hack, especially one with reputed mob ties like Esposito's.

So at a Sunday morning breakfast at Esposito's mother's home, Esposito agreed to give Koch secret logistical support in return for access to his administration. Newfield quotes Esposito as later bragging: "I get whatever I fucking want from [Koch]. I told him not to dump our captains, and he said no problem. He promised me access and that he would be a good mayor. . . . [Koch media adviser David] Garth didn't want to use my name. . . . But everyone knew I was calling the shots." Koch cut a similar deal with Bronx boss Stanley Friedman.

Once Koch took office, funny things began to happen. Machine captains were not fired; in fact many were promoted to high positions in contract-rich agencies. Koch appointed Anthony Ameruso, an Esposito crony, as commissioner of transportation, even though a screening panel Koch personally established found Ameruso unqualified. The Parking Violations Bureau was run on a complex system involving hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes, which went to PVB chief Lester Shafran and to Manes. Friedman held 167,000 shares in a dummy company called Citisource, which received a $22 million contract from the bureau to build hand-held computers for parking meters, even though Citisource had no assets, no employees, and no computer. (A systems analyst who pointed out these facts was told he'd be fired if he didn't recommend Citisource.) When evidence of corrupt activity made it to city hall, it was ignored or suppressed.

Why did Koch, whom not even his most severe critics consider personally corrupt, tolerate the mess around him? Newfield and Barrett argue that he continued to need the machines. Jay Turoff, Koch's head of the Taxi and Limousine Commission, for example, personally supervised the use

Human Rights & World Politics



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of more than 30 taxi and car service companies to ferry Koch voters to and from the polls in the 1985 primary, free of charge (a contribution worth an estimated $45,000). The big enchilada, however, was the gubernatorial bid, as Koch believed he wouldn't stand a chance without the county leaders.

All the while the media hailed Koch as a new Fiorello LaGuardia, an almost mythical figure who made the city work by force of personality and commitment. In part this was because Koch had cut his deals with the press as well. In 1977, according to the authors, Koch agreed to Rupert Murdoch's request to place a particular attorney in a future administration in return for the *New York Post*'s endorsement. He made the cover of *Time* and was discussed as a possible nominee on a presidential ticket. Newfield and Barrett, the skunks at the party that New York's media threw for Koch, are the most logical chroniclers of Koch's decline: while other papers were praising Koch's reign, the *Voice* kept throwing darts at city hall till they stuck.

Corruption, whether in Watergate or city hall, has the aura of grand conspiracy and high drama, but the nitty-gritty details of government-by-graft are in fact quite mundane. Newfield and Barrett do an excellent task of keeping narrative interests in mind. As the sordid mess unravels following Manes's suicide in early 1986, they tell the story through the eyes of columnist Jimmy Breslin and through those of the protagonists. The last chapters give wonderful detail from the trials of the PVB plunderers: Friedman downing glasses of Absolut in a New Haven bar, the tension between defense lawyer Thomas Puccio and prosecutor Rudolph Giuliani, who had long been personal friends. And while most of New York watched the Myerson trial as soap opera, Newfield and Barrett are the first writers to put it in the context of the abuse of power.

Where they are less successful is in spelling out how corruption impairs city government. The epilogue provocatively suggests that the closing of New York's Williamsburg Bridge in 1988 after cracks were discovered was linked to corruption. According to the authors, Esposito was extorting a bribe from a New Jersey company that made a concrete enhancement product for bridges; but Manes's suicide in January killed the deal. Similarly, the official who oversaw bridge maintenance resigned just before the scandal hit; he was revealed to be a business partner with the principal of an asphalt firm to whom he had given $3.5 million in contracts. The book cries out for more such examples of how graft has affected poverty programs, housing policy, and city services.

In addition, *City for Sale* has flaws as investigatory journalism. There are no footnotes, no notes on sources, no documentation of any kind. The only attempts to guide a reader are the index and a partial list of interviewees with no indication of who said what. It's fine to protect confidential sources, but many readers will want to know how, for example, a witnessless conversation has come to light, or what documents contain which facts. Furthermore, Newfield's power as kingmaker in New York politics is only slightly less than that of bosses he writes about, and the book has a tendency to dissolve into a press release for a Giuliani mayoral bid. It's a bit unseemly in a book on cronyism.

Still, *City for Sale* is a convincing indictment of a New York City era and a case study in how systemic corruption undermines democratic principles. If Ed Koch ends up with a different job in January 1990, he—and New York City—will have Newfield and Barrett to thank.

—*James Ledbetter*

The Wise Men Know What Wicked Things are Written on the Sky. Russell Kirk. *Regnery-Gateway, $17.95.* A conservative used to be a dull fellow who believed that things were just peachy in the country—a small-town booster like Sinclair Lewis's George Babbitt. A conservative intellectual was a contradiction in terms. In 1951, when William F. Buckley Jr. wrote *God and Man at Yale*, he described himself as an individualist rather than a conservative. Then came the publication in 1953 of Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*.

Kirk, a small-town eccentric who had retired to his grandfather's ancestral home in Mecosta after a brief, unhappy career as an instructor at Michigan State College,

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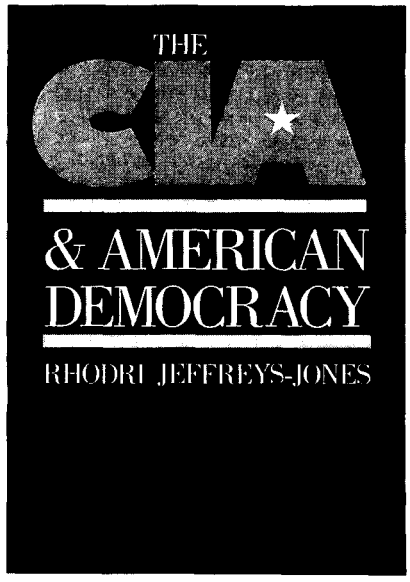

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uncovered an Anglo-American conservative tradition extending from Edmund Burke through Henry Adams and George Santayana. What was new was Kirk's claim that there was an "American" side of the tradition. "Certainly, conservatives have been routed, forced back from ditch to palisade," Kirk wrote, "but they have never surrendered."

Kirk's elegantly written history still might have gone unnoticed if ex-*Time* editor Whittaker Chambers had not convinced Henry Luce to feature the book in the magazine's Independence Day 1953 issue.

Kirk's conservatism was what later came to be called "traditional" as opposed to "libertarian." Kirk believed in the power of prescribed tradition and religion over reason; in economic liberty based on private property rather than on political liberty (Burke was "always a liberal never a democrat," Kirk wrote); he abhorred egalitarianism ("civilized society requires classes and orders"). He saw the state as a means of ensuring ordered liberty rather than as an intrusion upon elemental freedoms. Kirk once told historian George Nash that he felt closer politically to the socialist Norman Thomas than to the anarcho-libertarian Murray Rothbard.

As a traditionalist, Kirk's views also diverged from the conservatives who identified capitalism with virtue. In the fifties, he scorned the "mass-mind juke box culture" created by advertising. In the seventies, Kirk sympathized with environmentalists. An amused Kirk told me the story of being invited to a college to debate socialist Michael Harrington. A week earlier, Kirk asked the debate's organizers what the subject was and learned that it was the environment: he was to be "against it." Kirk advised the organizers to find another topic.

Since writing *The Conservative Mind*, Kirk has produced numerous books and articles, including several Gothic novels. Almost all are worth reading. Since Ronald Reagan's election in 1980, Kirk has been lionized—awarded the Ingersoll Prize and appointed a Distinguished Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, where two of his lecture series have been published. But if this second series of lectures, entitled *The Wise Men Know What Wicked Things are Written on the Sky*, from a G.K. Chesterton poem, is any indication, Kirk has had trouble coming to terms with the success of the movement that owes its name to his 1953 book.

Some conservatives, like sociologist Robert Nisbet, kept their distance from the Reagan administration's anti-intellectualism, corruption, and its Wilsonian attempt to export democracy. But while retaining his critical views of contemporary society, Kirk has insisted upon seeing the Reagan administration as the triumph of his principles. As a result, these lectures are a confusing amalgam of right-wing boosterism about Reagan and Burkean lament about the downfall of virtue.

When Kirk talks about Reagan, he sounds as if he were cribbing from Michael Deaver's handouts. "During the past years, productivity has increased greatly...the dollar has triumphed over all other currencies....The crime rate is diminishing....The narcotics traffic, though still alarming, is less formidable." Kirk compares the Reagan years to the reign of Augustus Caesar, who laid the basis for four centuries of Pax Romana, and he suggests that Reagan's views on education "may foreshadow the development in this country of an Augustan mode of education."

But in the same lecture series Kirk laments that "virtue in this land of ours seemingly never lay at a lower ebb...we see all about us a decline in public and private morality." He decries the downfall of education and the "decay of the family." He compares the nuclear families that have survived the holocaust of vice to the "Christian households of the decaying society of the Roman Empire." Is it 30 A.D. or 300 A.D.? And are we proud pagans or defiant Christians?

The Kirk of *The Conservative Mind* clearly saw himself as a Christian among pagans. Kirk's conservatism was a critical rather than celebratory faith. But the Kirk of today appears torn between the two postures. There are worthwhile passages in these lectures—among them, an interesting discussion of the concept of human rights—but the whole is marred by Kirk's inability to come to terms with the Reagan years.

—John B. Judis

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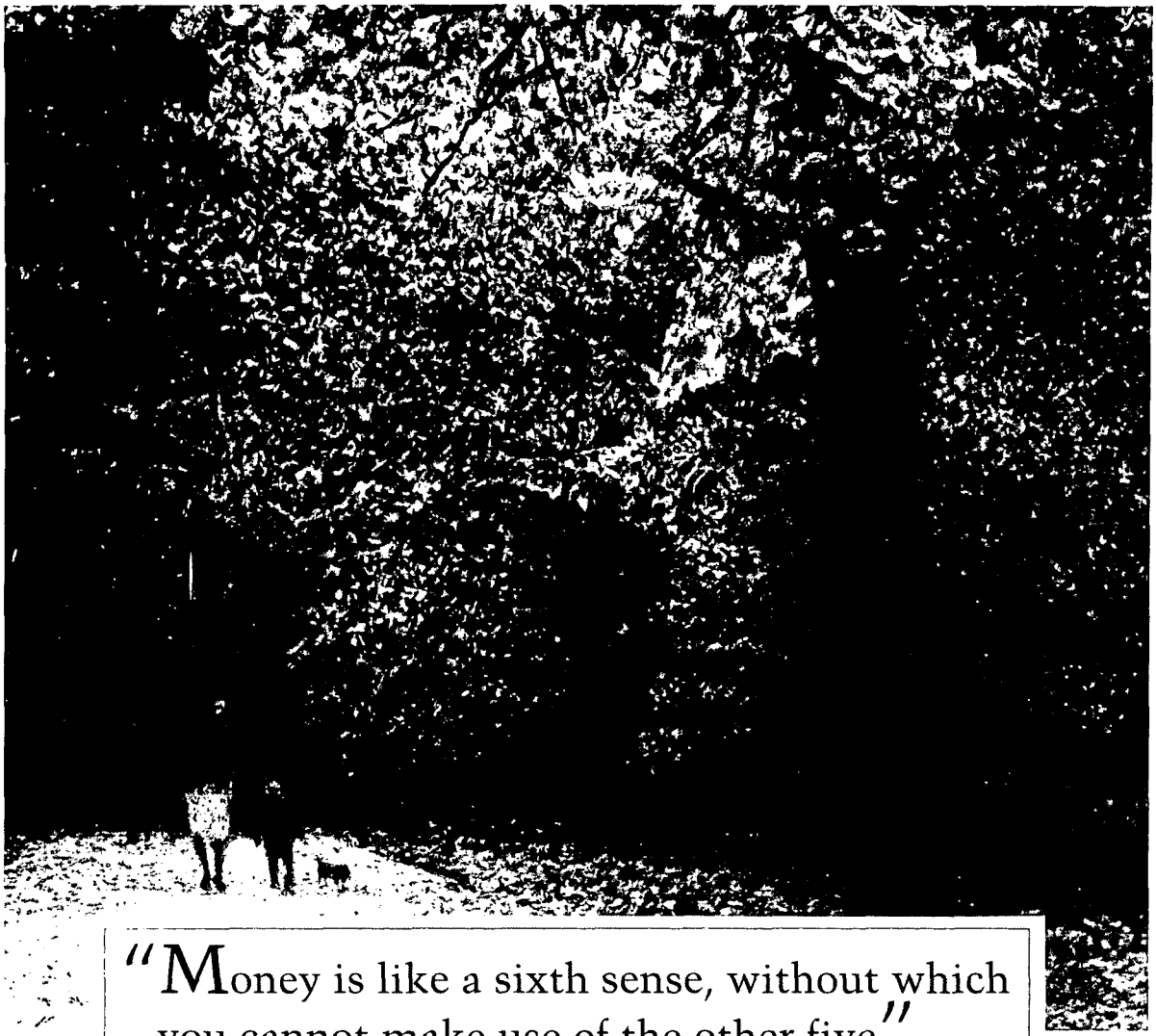

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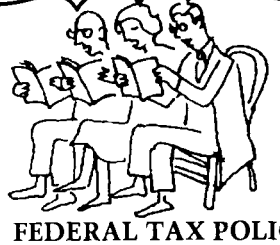

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